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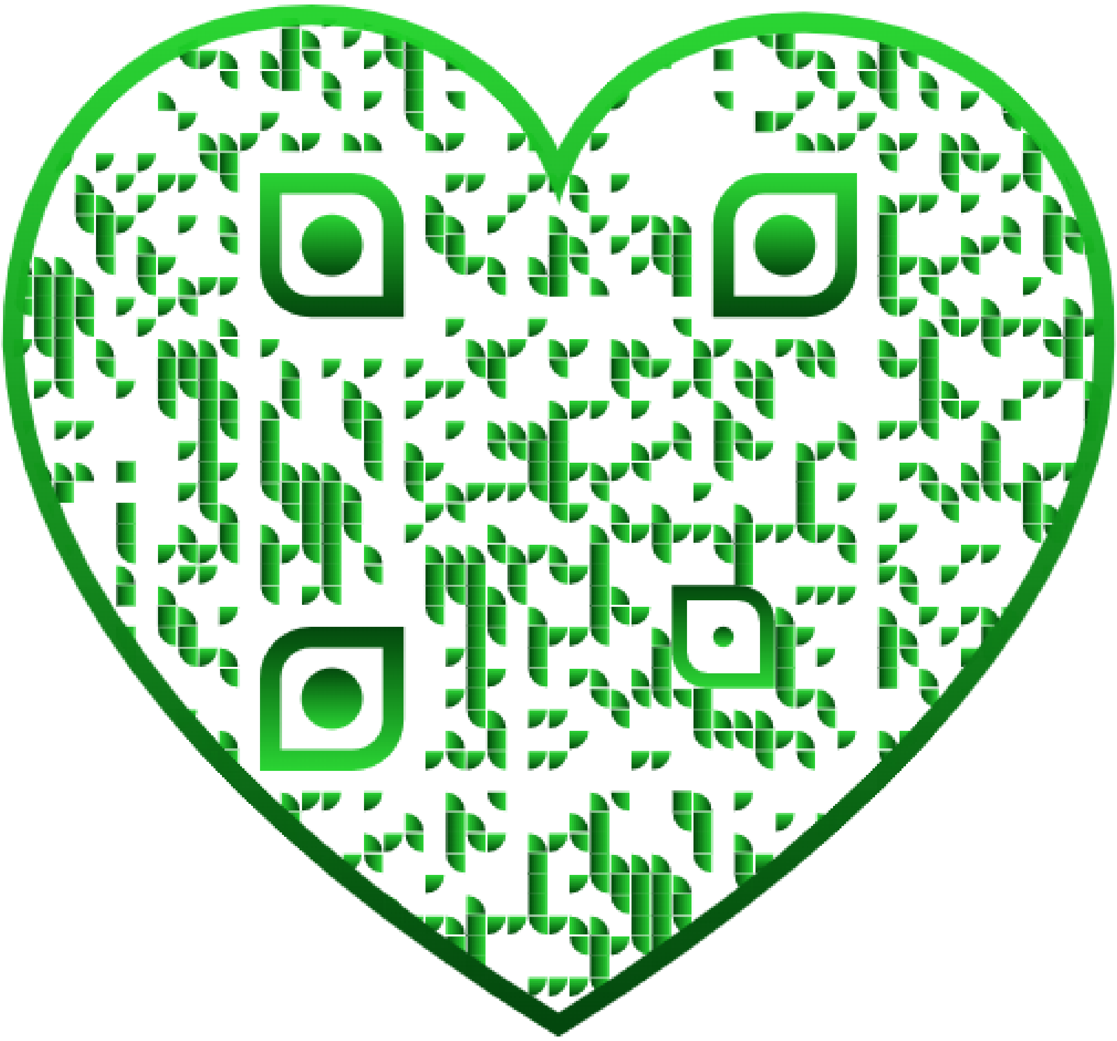

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CARL RICHARDSON, EDITOR

Normal service will resume in 2026, but who could refuse this wonderful motorboat moment its place on the cover? The Needles, the racing heritage, the winter sunshine. As Christmas Faireys go, this one is due its place at the top of our classic boat tree. In any other month, Ampere, the 30ft Camper & Nicholson that leads our pages would be the cover star. A wonderful boat, it teases the question 'what if?' The intended production run of what would become the six-strong Xyris class was cut short by the Second World War, but the idea was as sound as the boat itself. For evidence one need only look to the hundreds of builds C&N would launch on the later - and admittedly GRP - 32 and 35 models. It led me to think of other boats deserving of greater numbers. If I could grant you a Christmas wish to magically create more of one design, or indeed bring one back to life, what would it be? Let me know. It might not do anything useful but it will be a fun conversation. That only leaves me to bid farewell to 2025 (in magazine-land), wish you all a fine time over the festive period, ideally complete with one of those special, sparkling sailing days that can happen this time of year, and remind you to keep the sea cocks closed and a few ports open.

Carl

Classic Boat

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For cruising and racing sailors

ISSUE No 449

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NEIL RABINOWITZ

AMPERE
POOLE

AMPED UP FOR LIFE

Before the war, before glassfibre and the runaway success of the Nic 32... before the SCOD even... this 30-footer was Camper & Nicholsons' first stab at production boatbuilding

WORDS NIGEL SHARP **PHOTOS** DAVID HARDING, OR AS CREDITED

Facing page: Ampere sailing in Poole Bay

In the late 1930s, John Nicholson set out to try to persuade his father – the legendary designer Charles E Nicholson – that the family firm of Camper & Nicholsons should build a small batch of modestly sized keelboats 'on spec.' The idea may well have been prompted by the production of 14 of the new Bembridge Redwings in 1938 – when "the firm developed certain methods that saved considerable time and, incidentally, expense," according to *Yachting World* – but it was a departure from the company's core business of building one-off boats, many of them significantly larger. John later wrote that he had gone "on bended knees" to his father who was "fearful that we might endanger our name, but my persuasive powers won!"

"John was a charming fellow, very good with clients and that sort of thing," Charles's great nephew Peter Nicholson told me recently. "But he suffered badly as his father was pretty bossy."

The design for the new boat has been variously attributed to John (in the book *Camper & Nicholsons: Two Centuries of Yacht Building*, for instance) and to Charles (in *Lloyd's Register of Yachts*), but it is highly probable that it was a team effort. "The likelihood is that John would have roughed out a profile and sail plan, or maybe a lines plan, and handed it to the chief draughtsman Louis Jacobs, who would have taken care of the details," continued Peter. "So the design should have been attributed to Camper & Nicholsons, as should most of the designs credited to Uncle Charlie and indeed to me."

The results of John's endeavours were six 30ft (9.1m) fractionally rigged bermudan sloops that came to be known as the Xyris class. The construction of all of them started in 1939 but two were not completed until after the war. They had English elm keels, Lagos mahogany stems and transoms, mahogany planking, English steamed oak timbers with grown oak frames in way of the mast, Columbian pine stringers, canvas-covered pine decks, and 9hp Morris Vedette petrol engines. "It is safe enough to assert that the new standard sloops will be worthy of the name they bear," wrote a *Yachting Monthly* correspondent while they were all still under construction, "and the cost of approximately £850 inexpensive in relation to the workmanship."

"The new 30-footers have been designed purely for ordinary knockabout cruising but would provide good sport in handicap racing," reported *Yachting World*. "None of the finer points of design have been disregarded. Lines are remarkably easy, with a good run, easy quarters, and the centre of buoyancy reasonably well forward on a generally well-balanced hull… She has a nice seagoing bow and a pleasing sheer and an attractive short counter." *The Yachtsman* magazine added that "the equipment even includes a shaving mirror."

The four boats launched in 1939 – *Xyris*, *Laete*, *Rosalia* and *Twink* – all had slightly different internal arrangements according to the wishes of their commissioning owners; and two had self-tacking jibs with jib booms. Three remained in the Solent – where one of them, *Xyris* which was owned by the sail maker Jim Lapthorn, won the Island SC's Jubilee race that year – and the other went to Falmouth. The two boats launched after the war were *Cinder* and *Gadwall*. *Cinder* – which had been damaged during the war, probably as a result of German bombing raids – was initially owned by Charles E Nicholson himself. Much to his son's annoyance, Charles felt the need to give his boat additional ballast. A seventh *Xyris* boat – *Treenlaur* – was built by Minnow Yacht Co in Paignton, Devon in 1956.

HEART OVER HEADROOM

Nik Kidd has been a keen sailor for as long as he can remember. His parents "always owned boats" and spent 15 years sailing around the world. Nik himself was a dinghy instructor at Rockley Point Activity Centre and has sailed Albacores and Lasers (and still races the latter in Poole Harbour). His 'turning point' on the path to buying his first keelboat came in 2011 in the Stockholm archipelago where some friends were renting a house and invited him and his wife Louisa to join them. It so happened that he saw an advertisement (in this very publication) from a company chartering Folkboats not too far from the rented house, so they decided to combine a sailing holiday with a stay with their friends. "It was great fun," he said.

Nik first became aware that *Twink* was for sale through the Sandeman Yacht Company in 2015, by which time she had had about a dozen different owners. Although he thought it would be "nice to own something like this" he also thought that the price was a bit too high and that he wouldn't have the time or the inclination to do the work that the boat clearly needed. "But these things play on your mind a bit," he said and so, when he heard that the price had come down, in January 2016 he went to see her.

Twink was at Haslar Marina in Gosport and clearly in a poor state, having been neglected for about 18 months: her decks were leaking and there was quite a lot of water in the bilge. "But I thought she looked like an absolutely lovely boat, with a really nice sheerline and good provenance, and I got sucked in," he said. He had always imagined that he would have a boat that would allow his 6ft (1.8m) frame to stand up inside, but – despite *The Yachtsman*'s report in 1939 that the Xyris boats had "good headroom" – *Twink* fell desperately short by modern standards. But he did manage to find a part of the cabin where he could stand up – at the aft end with the companionway hatch open! "So I kidded myself that she had standing headroom," he said. "When you really want to buy something, you make all the facts fit to make it work!"

Barney Sandeman suggested that Nik have Paul Kendall of Traditional Shipwright Services come and inspect *Twink* to advise on any work that might need doing. She was lifted out of the water at Endeavour Quay, the former site of Camper & Nicholsons, where she had been built, and where she "looked lost" in the

CHRIS BROWN

180-tonne travel lift. “Paul wrote me up a guesstimate with all the usual caveats and said I had to be open-minded about how long the work would take and how much it would cost,” said Nik. “And I bought her.”

INTO THE SHED

Initially Nik thought he would store *Twink* under cover until he felt ready to go ahead with the work, but when he heard that Traditional Shipwrights would have space available in May, he decided to proceed straight away. While waiting for the space, she was towed by road to Ridge Wharf Yacht Centre on the banks of the River Frome where she was lifted off her ballast keel to allow Traditional Shipwrights to renew the keel bolts with new bronze ones.

Nik then enlisted the surveyor John Lilley to oversee the work. “The first thing he did was put his screwdriver through the transom,” said Nick. “All of its structural integrity had been in the fading chrome T, W, I, N and K!” Work then began in earnest at Traditional Shipwright Services’ premises at Westons Point Boatyard on the eastern shores of Dorset’s Poole Harbour.

The hull planking had had a lot of repairs over the years. These included new sections of planking with scarf joints just 2in (50mm) long and these were replaced, incorporating longer scarfs. The topside planking was already mahogany splined, while below the waterline it was traditionally caulked. After much debate it was decided – with the company’s extensive experience of splining X Boats in mind – to epoxy spline the whole hull, not least because it was felt that the 11/16in (17mm) planking was thin enough for this to be more beneficial than caulking. The transom was renewed with three layers of plywood and a mahogany veneer.

At some point a teak deck had been fitted but this was now leaking and extensively worn. “And John was concerned that it wouldn’t have been as stiff as the original decking which would have had tongue and groove joints,” said Nik. So the teak was removed and, after some deck beams and sections of the beamshelf were renewed, a 5/8in (16mm) plywood deck was fitted and sheathed with epoxy/glass. The cockpit sole had been raised about 8in (20cm) higher than its likely original position and Nik was concerned that it would have been uncomfortable for steering and that the boom would be too close to any crew standing up, so this was now lowered as far as it could be while still allowing self-draining.

The mast (possibly the original) had galvanised steel fittings and these were replaced with new bronze ones, some from Davey & Co while others were specially fabricated by David Mallinson of Midas Manufacturing. The rig included the original self-tacking headsail configuration and sheet winches on the coachroof. The self-tacking jib was discarded, and the now-unserviceable coachroof winches were later removed

The other Xyris boats

Cinder/Ellen Sophia

Charles Nicholson sold *Cinder* in 1951 to Captain EF Haylock, the editor of *Yachting World*, who renamed her *Ellen Sophia* but only owned her for about a year. She was last heard of about four years ago when she was based in Foleaux, France with a Parisian owner.

Laete/Seadrake

Laete was renamed *Seadrake* in 1959, and in the 1960s she was given a masthead rig with the mast about 10in (25cm) further aft than original. Since 2015 she has been owned by Chris Titchmarsh (of Titchmarsh Marina) and has had some restoration work done, but is not currently in commission.

Rosalia/Lady of Kent

Rosalia was renamed *Lady of Kent* in 1947 but her current owner – Alan Newton, who bought her in 2009 – restored her original name. She is in commission and is moored at Mylor Yacht Harbour.

Gadwall

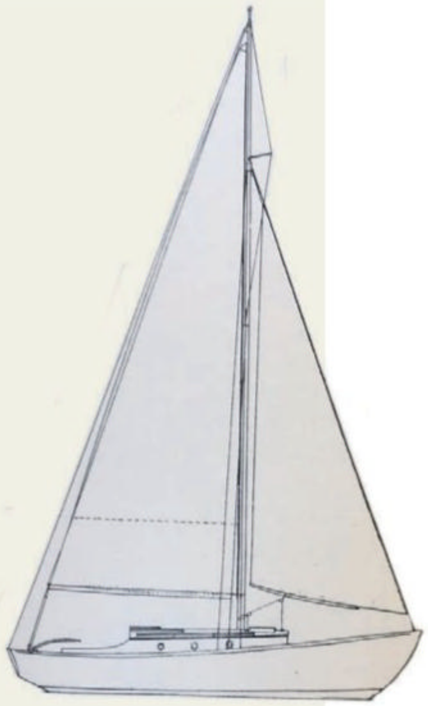
Gadwall has been based on Hayling Island since 2016, first with her previous owner Armand Attard and now with her current owner Steven Moffatt, both of whom have done a great deal of work to her. Steven is considering moving her to his native Scotland at some point in the future.

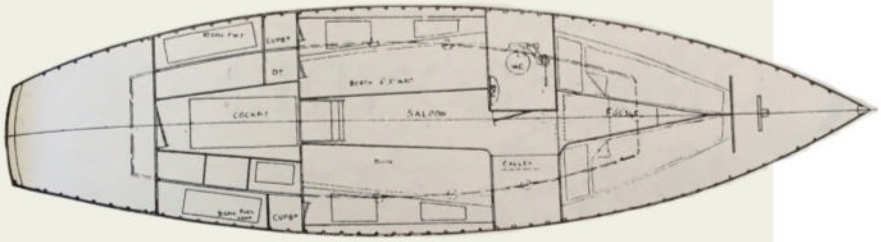
Xyris/Fidget

Xyris was renamed *Fidget* in 1966. In August 1985 she was swamped in a gale off Salcombe and sank very quickly. Her crew of naval personnel took to the liferaft and were rescued by the Salcombe lifeboat.

Treenlaur

The only Xyris boat not built by C&N was scrapped in 2012 after she broke her moorings on the Helford River and was badly damaged. Chris Titchmarsh subsequently acquired the rig and some other fittings for *Seadrake*.





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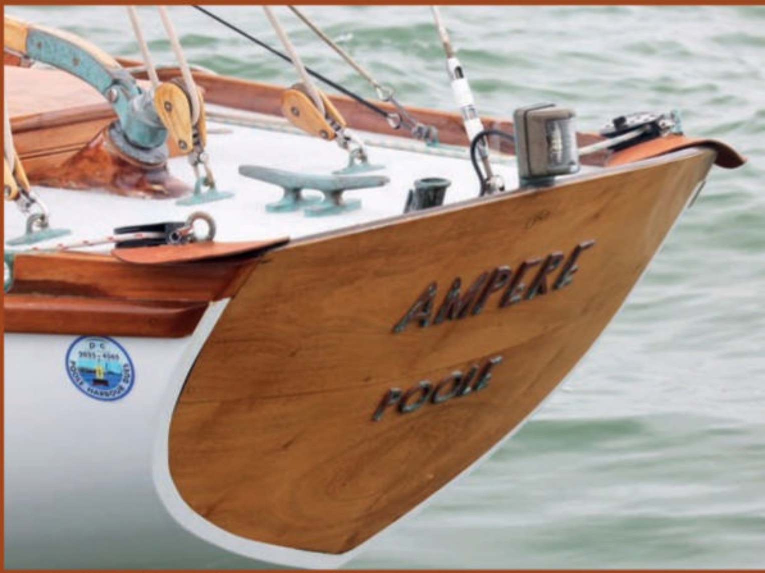
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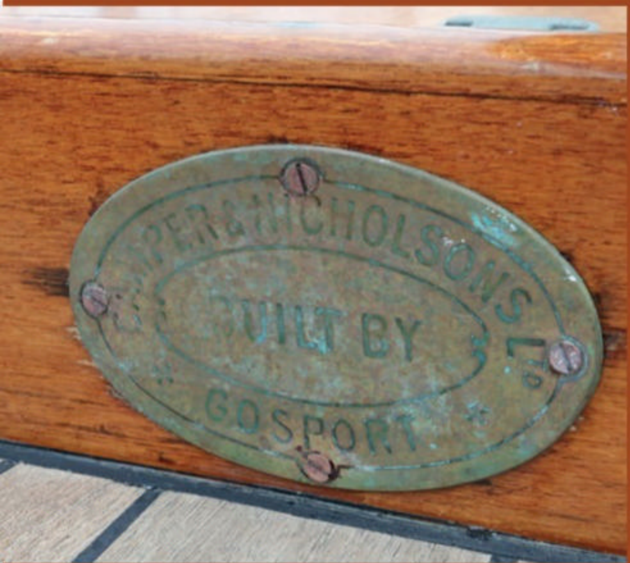
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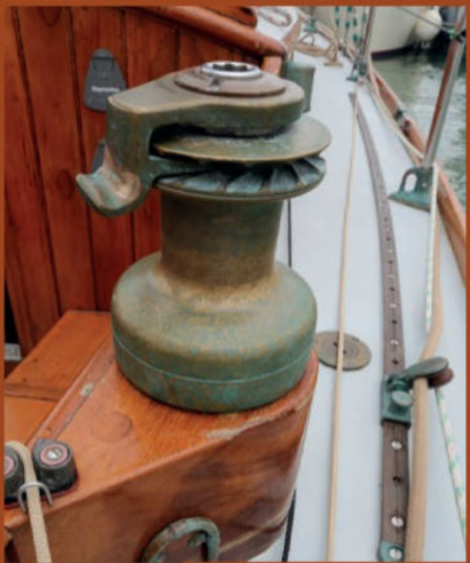
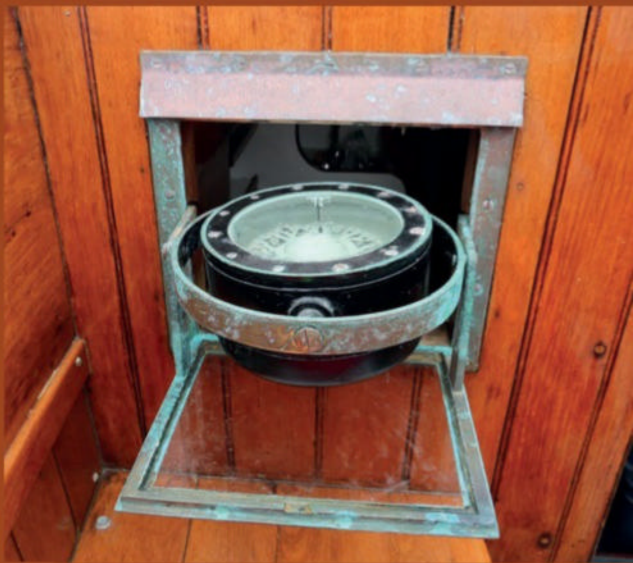
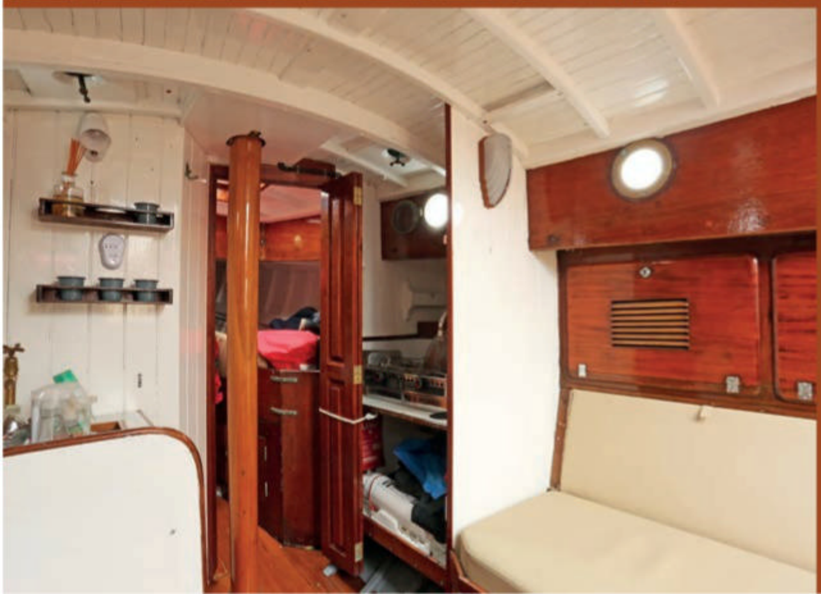
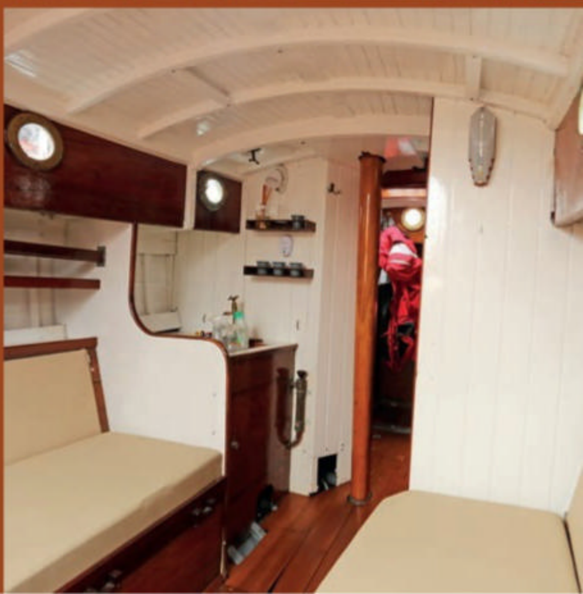






Clockwise from top left: Ampere racing in Cowes Spring Classics; Foredeck crew on standby; The new transom and name; Compass emerging from the cockpit bulkhead; The saloon looking forward and to port; The saloon looking forward and to starboard; The original builder's plate; Nik and friends waiting for some wind at Cowes Spring Classics; Wilmex sheet winch.

Photos on this page Nigel Sharp unless otherwise credited



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Above: Powering to windward at Cowes Spring Classics

Below: Getting ready to hoist the spinnaker

AMPERE

DESIGN/BUILD	**Camper & Nicholson, 1939**
LOD	**30ft (9.1m)**
BEAM	**8ft (2.4m)**
DRAFT	**4ft 6in (1.4m)**
DISP	**4.25tonnes**
SAIL AREA	**357 sqft (33.2 m²)**

and replaced with new Wilmex bronze ones on the coamings, and the relatively short tracks on the toerail were replaced with longer ones from Davey & Co on the side decks, not least to allow the use of a larger overlapping headsail. The boat previously had no stanchions and guard wires and these were now fitted, initially with no pushpit or pulpit, but the latter was added subsequently.

RETURNING TO ELEMENT

With the work complete, the boat was back in the water in October 2017, but with a new name. Nik had been concerned that the original name's "modern urban dictionary meaning" was going to be "problematic!" He chose the new name of *Ampere*, not least because Louisa is a physics teacher (incidentally, they have a dog called Edison!) but the final decision was made after a trip to Ikea Croydon, sited in an old power station on Ampere Way. Classic Marine supplied new bronze lettering for the transom.

Having previously had a holiday home in Poole, Nik and Louisa have recently moved from Epsom, Surrey, to live there full time. *Ampere* is kept at Port of Poole Marina and Nik regularly sails her with friends – occasionally taking part in Poole Yacht Racing Association races – or single-handed.

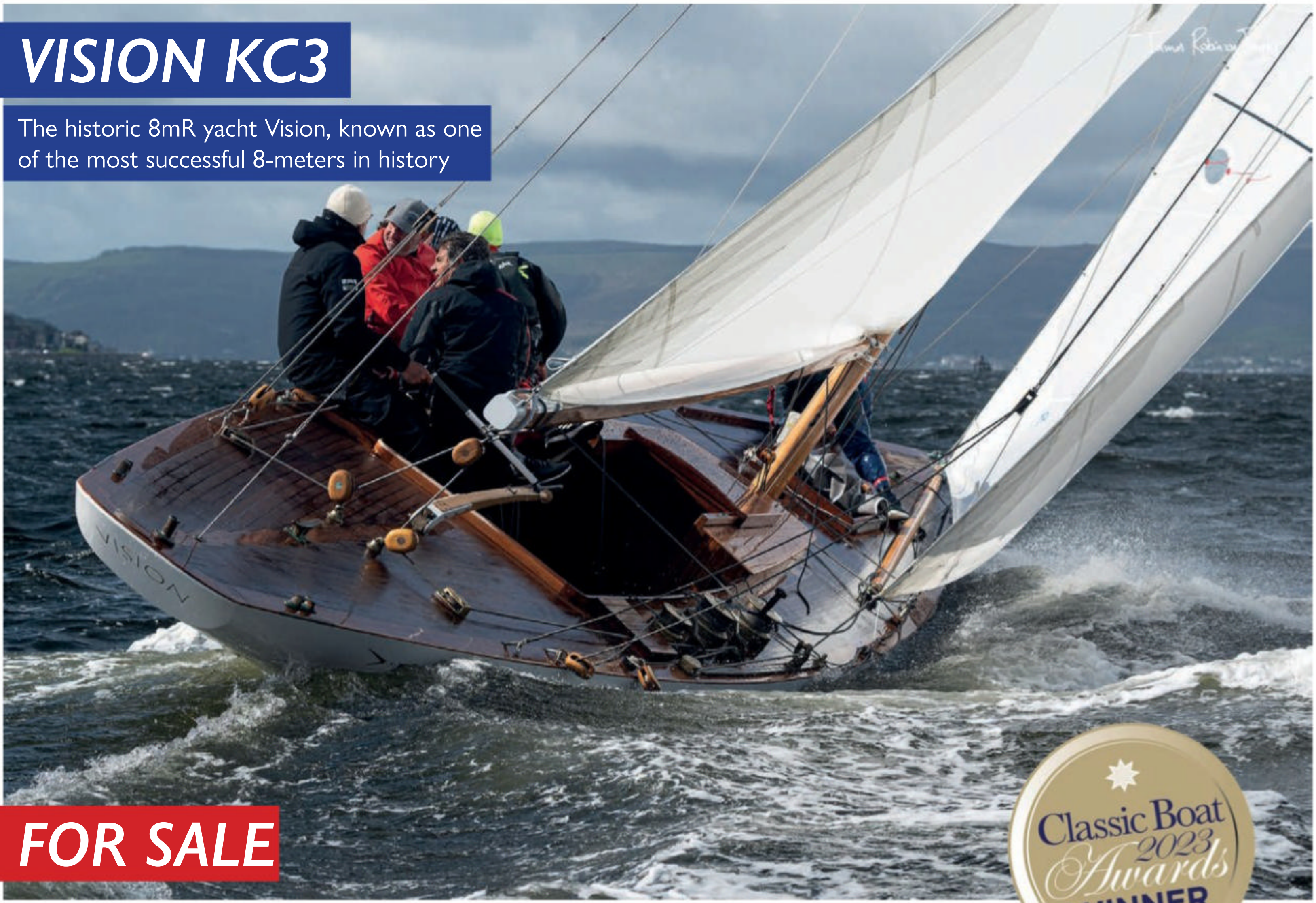
Ampere's regular maintenance programme involves spending every third winter at Traditional Shipwright Services "who can redo all the bad varnish work I have done in the meantime," says Nik. For the winters spent in the marina, Nik initially had an all-over cover made, but this proved to be a bad idea, when *Ampere* took a ferocious wind on the beam a couple of years ago, resulting in three stanchions bent to about 45^0 and a 3ft (90cm) length of damaged toerail. *Ampere* now has a relatively modest cockpit cover.

Nik has no ambition to sail any great distance in *Ampere* but he regularly sails her between Weymouth and the eastern Solent. She has been a regular competitor at Cowes Spring Classics regatta, which was where I met Nik in May. Up against four highly competitive boats – *Mikado* and three West Solent ODs – their fifth place in the only race the weather allowed them to finish was probably as good as they could have hoped for. The 'highlight' for Nik was having to climb *Ampere*'s mast twice, to retrieve the spinnaker halyard after its "quick releasing snap shackle" twice let go. "It wasn't very comfortable," he said, "rolling around in Osborne Bay with RIBs going past, hanging on to a skinny mast that isn't used to having 85kg of middle-aged man up it!"

CHRIS BROWN

VISION KC3

The historic 8mR yacht Vision, known as one of the most successful 8-meters in history



FOR SALE

Generations Cup

The Story of an Icon of Sailing

Built in 1930 by the Camper & Nicholsons shipyard, designed by Charles E. Nicholson, ***VISION*** was commissioned by a Canadian consortium for the Canada's Cup, a prestigious sailing competition often compared to the America's Cup of the Great Lakes. It was the only one of the yachts built for this purpose to be designed by the English shipyard.

Once the Canada's Cup campaign was completed, ***VISION*** was sold at auction among the members of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club, joining other boats of the same class, forming a historic fleet of 8 Metre yachts that raced for many years in Canadian waters.

Starting in the early 1980s, ***VISION*** began competing in World Cup races in Europe, and in the 1990s, it was transferred to France, where it continued its competitive career until 2000.

After a careful restoration that was started by the Pasquì Shipyard in Villefranche and later completed by the SIBMA Shipyard, owned by the Quaranta family, in Imperia, ***VISION*** returned to racing. In 2022 and 2023, it secured second place in the Neptune category at the World Cup, and in 2024, it won in both the categories Neptune and Sira at the World Cup in the waters of the Clyde, Scotland.

In May 2023, ***VISION*** also won the Classic Boat Award for the best restoration of a yacht over 40ft as recognized by Classic Boat magazine in its May 2023 issue.

In addition to these successes, ***VISION*** has won many other prestigious trophies, including:

- SIRA Cup: won eight times (1983, 1984, 1985, 1994, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2024)
- Coppa d'Italia
- The Neptune trophy
- Generation's Cup
- Coppa Imperia

Today, ***VISION*** continues to participate successfully in international races, with its racing condition maintained in perfect shape by the SIBMA Shipyard in Imperia. The yacht is kept in optimal condition to take on the most competitive challenges.

Contact Paolo via paolo.manzoni@gespimilano.it for more information • www.visionkc3.boats

MONACO CLASSIC WEEK 2025

The big show in Monaco

WORDS AND PHOTOS RICHARD JOHNSTONE-BRYDEN

The Yacht Club de Monaco (YCM) assembled another superb hand-picked fleet consisting of 40 classic sailing yachts, 82 motor boats and 26 International 12 dinghies for the 17th biennial Monaco Classic Week. In contrast to recent events, this year's Classic Week opened with an informal race for the entire fleet of classic yachts, effectively an opportunity for the competitors to familiarise themselves with Monegasque waters. Remarkably, half of the fleet were over a century old including *Partridge*, which is celebrating the 140th anniversary of her launch this year. *Mariska* kept the flag flying for the 15-M class in the absence of YCM's much loved flagship *Tuiga* after her recent dismasting (see CB November) and the 131ft (40m). Instead, YCM members sailed the gaff-rigged schooner *Black Swan* built by Camper & Nicholsons in 1899. With such yachting history on display, you could be forgiven for forgetting there were races to win. The forty-plus yachts showed they have lost none of their ability or desire to do so. By the close of the third and best day of racing, *Olympian* held onto the provisional lead in gaff rig category. *Mariska* dominated the Big Boat class, while in Vintage Marconi, it was *Falcon* that took control of the scoreboard. In Vintage Marconi B, *One Wave* triumphed and in Classique Marconi, *Argynne III* from YCM led the way.

For the 12ft dinghies, two races were sailed with *Oliver* leading the ranking. On the final day, light winds moved the focus to Port Hercule. Allegra Gucci chaired the jury judging the Elegance Contest as the fleet left the YCM's marina one by one. The performance of *Mariska*'s crew, including the two dancing sailors high up in the rigging, rightly secured victory in the Classic Yacht category. Other winners included the 130ft (39.6m) gaff-rigged schooner *Mariette of 1915* which secured the coveted Monaco Classic Week Trophy from the jury chaired by Sir Robin Knox-Johnston for "the combination of the quality of her restoration, elegance and yachting spirit."

4
PURITAN
LONDON

2

LADY ISABELLE

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1 A good start for the Charles E Nicholson-designed 8-M yacht *Suzette*
2 *Belle Aventure*
3 Lining up for the start
4 At *Puritan*'s helm
5 *Mariette of 1915*
6 Elegance, Riva style!
7 *Partridge* lifts her skirts
8 *Partridge*'s crew dressed to impress for the elegance contest
9 The 15-M yacht *Mariska*
10 The Dunkirk Little Ship *Lady Isabelle*
11 *Suzette*
12 Relaxing on *Peggy Bawn*'s foredeck
13 Easing *Partridge*'s mainsheet

DUTCH CLASSIC YACHT WEEK

Reboot for true classics only

WORDS AND PHOTOS RON VALENT

After 34 years in Hellevoetsluis, Dutch Classic Yacht Week moved to a new location and set up. The result was a great success. The move came after a turbulent period for the regatta, when an ill-fated expansion of yacht types saw numbers skyrocket then plummet. Marcel van Loosbroek, association chairman, had the nerve to make hard decisions, moving to Ijsselmeer and changing the format from open entry to invitational, to stage a smaller event with only true classic yachts. From 23-27 July, 48 beautiful classics came together in the inner harbour of Enkhuizen's old town. The backdrop of the beautiful historic houses and fortifications of this ancient town was perfect for an event celebrating history and style. The main groups were Classic A and B and Spirit of Tradition, with sub groups for Folkboats, Dragons, Metre Class yachts and centenary yachts, of which an impressive 10 showed up. The three oldest were the gaff-rigged, riveted iron yachts *Sperwer* (1885), *Pimpernel* (1899) and *Waterraaf* (1900). The racing was hard but a great social programme balanced it with free breakfasts, sponsored happy hours, prize-giving and a meal on the dock by the yachts. OGA member Andy Balfe, owner and builder of the gaff-rigged *Fable*, was thoroughly impressed. “I love this set up in a historic town and the social side was perfectly organised. A really great event.”

Previous winner *Pelikaan* is no stranger to the DCYW. Frank Zaremba and his partner Nicole de Wit now race and cruise the *Havsörnen II* design, achieving a creditable third place. “The event is well organised and we will come next time.” Bertold Casaretto has attended since 1995, first with a Folkboat, and for the last 18 years with the superb *Princess*. “She was built by the Martinnsons Yard on Orust and raced in the Swedish Admirals Cup team. She was then rebuilt as a comfortable cruiser with a very luxurious interior, but the hull, rig and deck layout are still the same as in her racing days. I will come back for sure and hope that next time more German yachts will also come here.”

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1 *Vashti*, first of the class of offshore racers of the name. Designed by Alan Buchanan, built in 1958
2 The immaculately restored and maintained Hillyard 6-Tonner *Soma* from 1939 passes the Dromedaris, former city gate and prison
3 View of the inner harbour of Enkhuizen
4 The elegant *Sperwer* from 1885
5 From left to right, three riveted iron yachts: *Waterraaf* (1900), *Pimpernel* (1899) and *Sperwer* (1885). That's 391 years of yachting history.
6 Race start on the Thursday
7 Gaff-rigged *Fable* alongside the 6-Metre yacht *Bobcat II*
8 The 75m² National Cruiser Class *Muschka* from 1923. Design by Von Hacht
9 OGA yacht *Fable* and the press boat, a stylish 1924 Petterson motor launch
10 *Princess*, ex Swedish Admiral's Cup racer
11 Breakfast in the Dromedaris
12 *Pelikaan*, a Havsornen II design, came third
13 Crew dinner on the dock

12 METRE NORTH AMERICAN CHAMPIONSHIP | NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND | ©2025 STEPHEN R. CLOUTIER

US-16
US 17
12

12-Metre North American Championship

Multi-generational crews, timeless yacht design, and modern competition took centre stage in Newport, Rhode Island for the 2025 12-Metre North American Championship.

A small yet iconic fleet of four boats saw some fierce competition and late-season conditions that shifted from light winds to stronger breezes, testing both the precision and physicality of crews.

Columbia (1958), skippered by Hegarty, captured top honours in both the Traditional Division and the Open Division, with *Weatherly* (1958), helmed by Steven Eddleston, securing second in both classes. *American Eagle* US21 (1964) and *Courageous* US26 (1974) rounded off the places.

Special mention goes to *Courageous*'s crew, bolstered by youth sailors from Oakcliff Sailing — part of the class's commitment to engaging the next generation.

Naval architect TJ Perrotti, who has previously competed on the 1928 12-Metre *Onawa* US6, laid out the enduring importance of this class: "What's unique about the 12-Metre fleet is that innovation has continued within the same rule for more than a century. What continues to amaze me about the 12-Metres is that a boat designed in the 1920s, if well-sailed and well-maintained, can still go head-to-head with a yacht from the 1980s. It speaks to the brilliance of the 12-Metre rule and the enduring integrity of these designs."

Sails to shelter project wins Honours

The Superyacht Life Foundation's annual awards, the Honours, was notable for having its first all-female line-up this year.

With the 2025 ceremony held at the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show (FLIBS), The Honours celebrates people within the large yacht sector who advance science, protect the planet, support communities, and inspire others through courage, creativity and compassion. Nominations are made by fellow professionals and yacht owners, with 238 submitted this year.

One winner was Angela Abshier, founder of Sail to Shelter, a non-profit organisation giving retired sails a second life as shelters. Angela saw potential in every discarded sheet of fabric. Working with architects, designers and universities, she began deconstructing sails into panels of Kevlar-reinforced material that could last for a decade. "It might seem like nothing," she says, "but to someone sleeping under it, it's everything." Her career began in the garment industry, using deadstock apparel. Her first time on a sailing yacht changed everything. "Sailing was my first true experience of freedom; it was incredible. But I couldn't stop thinking about what happens to all these sails when they're no longer used?"

Accepting her award, Angela said "The sails that once harnessed the power of the wind are now providing protection from it. It's proof that even the materials of this industry have the potential to serve a higher purpose."

The Superyacht Life Foundation is a non-profit, commercially agnostic industry body that champions positive people, places and projects surrounding superyachting. Executive Director, Dilan Sarac, said: "The Honours is not just another ceremony, it is a storytelling platform designed to change perceptions by celebrating the people who are using the industry as a vessel for progress."

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126$^{\text{ft}}$ John G.Alden Schooner
PURITAN

1931. Refit 2017.
PURITAN is quite simply a legend.
She beautifully carries before her the spirit of America's 'Gilded Age', was one of the earliest participants in the 'Classic Yacht Revival', and has continued evangelistically to spread the word for over four decades, with alumni becoming key players, disciples even.

103$^{\text{ft}}$ Ketch-rigged Gulet AKHENATON

1968. Refit 2024. AKHENATON is a true sailing yacht. She is ketch-rigged and of the gullet type. She boasts some spacious accommodation for up to 10 guests and 5 crew. She sails very well and has been maintained at the highest standard of the yachting industry. She is RINA classified and registered as a pleasure yacht, while being eligible for commercial registration.

97$^{\text{ft}}$ Alan Buchanan Ketch TELSTAR VI

1968. Rebuilt 2019. TELSTAR VI is a classically designed, auxiliary ketch with all the character and style of the 1960s, but the luxurious comfort, amenities, and advantages of a modern yacht. Her strength and long range will provide endless enjoyment for local and world cruising. TELSTAR VI is carvel-built of mahogany and oak. She underwent a substantial €13 million refit in Malta from 2012 to 2019, where she was completely stripped out. Her all-new equipment also includes carbon spars. The extensive refit enables MCA coding.

90$^{\text{ft}}$ New Classic Yacht WHITEFIN

1983. WHITEFIN was designed by Californian Bruce King. The result is an exquisitely proportioned mix of agility, lightness, and grace. WHITEFIN was given a complete refit in January 2020. The heart of life on board is the open-plan area in the widest part of the boat, which includes the galley, partially recessed, the nav station, the bar, and the saloon with fireplace and piano. The boat consists of four cabins: the owner's suite, all aft; the VIP guest cabin with a queen-sized bed and two twin guest cabins.

67$^{\text{ft}}$ German Frers New Classic Replica RECLUTA

2021. German Frers's personal yacht, designed by his father in 1942 and built by Tito Szyka in Argentina, RECLUTA has a special character! She combines classic, sleek lines with modern technology and refined comfort. She has participated successfully in the classic racing circuit: Voiles of St. Tropez, Thropee Bailly de Suffren, Palma de Mallorca, Mahon, Antibes, Regates Royales de Cannes, and Argentario Sailing Week.

Burger 60 SALLY

1959 - Refit: 2022. An iconic classic masterpiece built by Burger in 1959 and rebuilt in 2022 with top-quality Italian craftsmanship, featuring all contemporary technology and comforts. SALLY is a long-range classic Gentleman Yacht with a special character. She is in "as-new" condition.

34$^{\text{ft}}$ Runabout LA MAGICIENNE

2023. Classic runabout replica from a François Camatte design (1926) with modern construction and equipment. Ideal for a day trip as well as suitable as a large yacht tender. Economical to use, and easy to run and maintain.

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MYBA

A last hurrah to summer

Brightwork gleamed in the last rays of summer as 13 boats gathered for the Beaulieu River Wooden Boat Association's autumnal equinox meet.

This is a social event with only two rules: no racing and definitely no plastic. The meet was created by James Evans and Ian Rawlinson in 2018 as an alternative to the usual regattas, or as James puts it: "There was no real wooden boat festival, where you can just enjoy the boats without racing."

James is the proud owner of the 1937 gaff cutter *Mirelle*, and Ian owns the 1900-built, Charles Sibbick-designed 42ft (12.8m) yawl *Saunterer*, once owned by Captain Lawrence Oates of the ill-fated Scott Antarctic expedition.

Finishing at the Royal Southampton Yacht Club, Bryony Mackrill, co-owner of *Peregrine*, the beautifully-restored 1936-built Fife 40, with husband Martyn, the Royal Yacht Squadron's resident artist, summed it all up with a toast to "a last hurrah to a fantastic summer."

Power and sail rejoiced in some very fair weather, with attendees including *Kingfisher* and *Cervesa*, two James A Silver motorboats. Also there was *Thalia*, the 1899-built 45ft gaff cutter, designed and built by George Wanhill; *Tarifa*, the 1909-built GU Laws-designed 28ft gaff sloop; and *Charm*, the beautiful 1922 Albert Strange gaff yawl that will soon feature in this very magazine.

Royal visit for the BBA

Her Royal Highness, the Princess Royal, visited the Boat Building Academy in Lyme Regis, Dorset, to meet students and learn more about its work.

The Princess, who is Patron of The National Transport Trust, also unveiled a Red Wheel plaque, awarded by the Trust in recognition of the academy's important role in Britain's transport and industrial heritage.

While at the Academy, the Princess enjoyed a demonstration of steam bending by tutor Samuel Robinson and students Hannah Blake and Eleanor Snape, ably assisting the team as the section was secured for bending.

Director Will Reed said: "The Princess Royal's visit comes at a critical time as we prepare to launch a campaign to buy the freehold of our building, and in doing so secure the future of the academy and strengthen the future of the UK boatbuilding industry."

At the end of the tour, the founder of the BBA, Commander Tim Gedge AFC RN, presented the princess with a wooden, half-scale, 8ft spooned oar handmade by BBA tutor Mike Broome. A recent recipient of the Classic Boat Lifetime Achievement Award, Tim said: "The princess was very well-informed and hugely engaged during her visit. We all feel immensely proud to have been able to showcase our work to her."

Cutty Sark's new sustainable spar

When a new spar was required for the legendary ship's mizzen, *Cutty Sark*'s team of technicians had a novel idea. In a bid to showcase conservation and traditional skills, it was decided to carry out the operation by hand and sail alone, down to delivering the 32ft spar on engineless barge *Blue Mermaid* (CB October 2025), a two-day voyage, carrying it ashore and winching it on deck.

Maldon shipwrights, KJ Finch, crafted the spar from Douglas fir, which will now be painted and have its metalwork added on the tea clipper's deck by the ship's technicians. All in the name of conservation.

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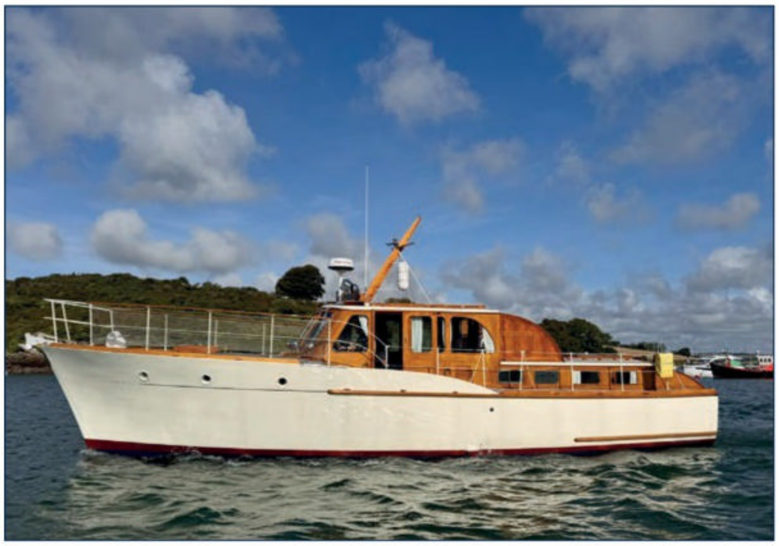
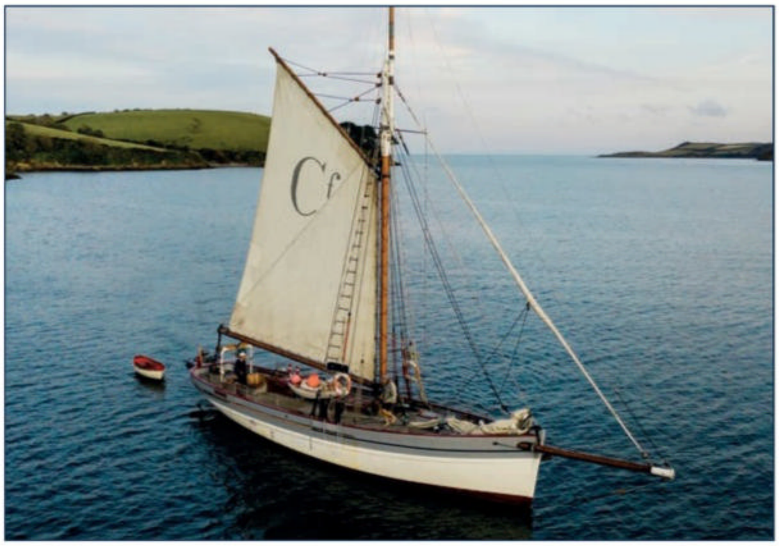


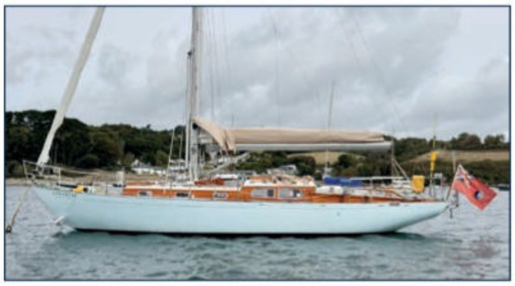
43' Fred Parker Twin Screw Motor Yacht built by Moodys in 1964 to Lloyds 100A1. All teak hull, new solid teak deck in 2019. Great interior layout offering 5 berths in 3 separate sleeping cabins with 2 heads and a separate shower. Twin Cummins 72hp diesels give 8 knots cruising speed. Professionally maintained yacht.

Devon £100,000



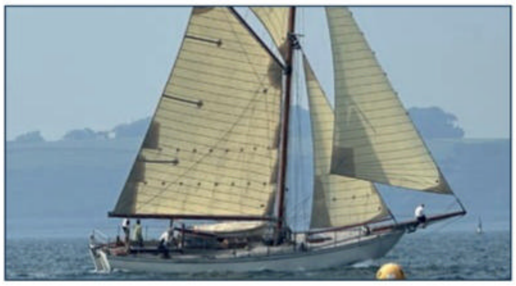
53' Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter built in 1893, arguably one of the most well known and successful pilot cutters still sailing today. In present ownership for 25 years, cruised extensively both sides of the Atlantic. Major rebuild completed in late 1990's with continual professional upgrades and maintenance.

Cornwall £195,000



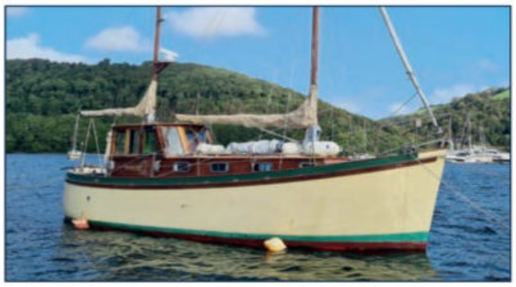
37' Buchanan Prior 37 built by R. J. Prior & Son in 1964 to Lloyds 100A1. Major bottom up rebuild 2002-2005. Much further work including new sails and rigging 2017 and new engine 2022. Extensive work list available. The most complete and turn key yacht of this type we have ever been able to offer for sale.

Cornwall £65,000



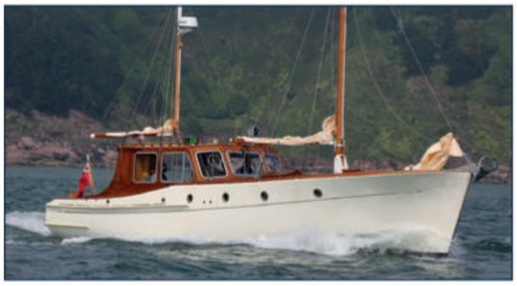
54' Laurent Giles Dyarchy Gaff Cutter launched in 1995. Professional built with strip plank hull, very robust construction built to withstand any weather. Cavernous interior space with 8 berths and 7' headroom. Well proven, fast and capable boat which stands out from the crowd and is built to stand the test of time.

Cornwall £265,000



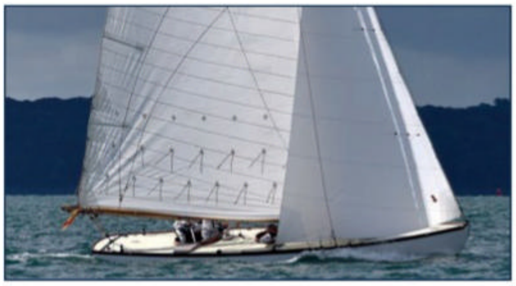
33' Miller Fifer Motor Sailer built by Millers of St Monance in 1962. New Holland 85hp diesel gives a comfortable 7 knots. 5 berths including a double. Recent sails, new standing rigging and all new navigation systems. An easily handled, safe and comfortable motor sailer, fully equipped. 2022 survey available.

Devon £29,000



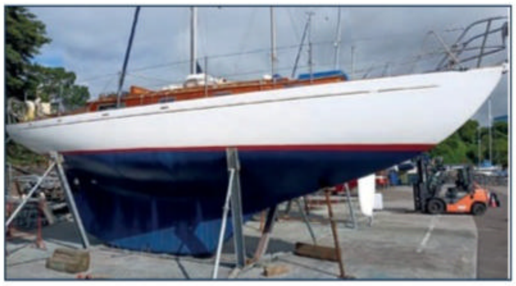
42' Fred Parker Motor Yacht built by Nunn Bros. in 1959. Complete rebuild between 2013-2017, no expense spared, this is the most up together and turn key motor yacht we have seen in a long time. Impeccably maintained, cruised extensively around Scotland in comfort and safety. A truly remarkable motor yacht.

Scotland £150,000



27' Starling Burgess 6m Class Yacht built by Herreshoff in 1921. Converted to gaff rig with new sails and rigging in 2024. Fully optimised for racing with Harken deck gear. Hugely successful race record in recent years with the potential to win a lot of silverware under IRC rules. A very special yacht in sparkling condition.

Hants £35,000



34' Buchanan Saxon built by Priors in 1962. Very typical cruiser racer of her day, comfortable and capable with excellent sailing qualities. Recent shipwright refit. Perkins M30 engine. 5 berths with 1.86m headroom. A lovely looking yacht with full inventory perfect for classic regattas or family cruising.

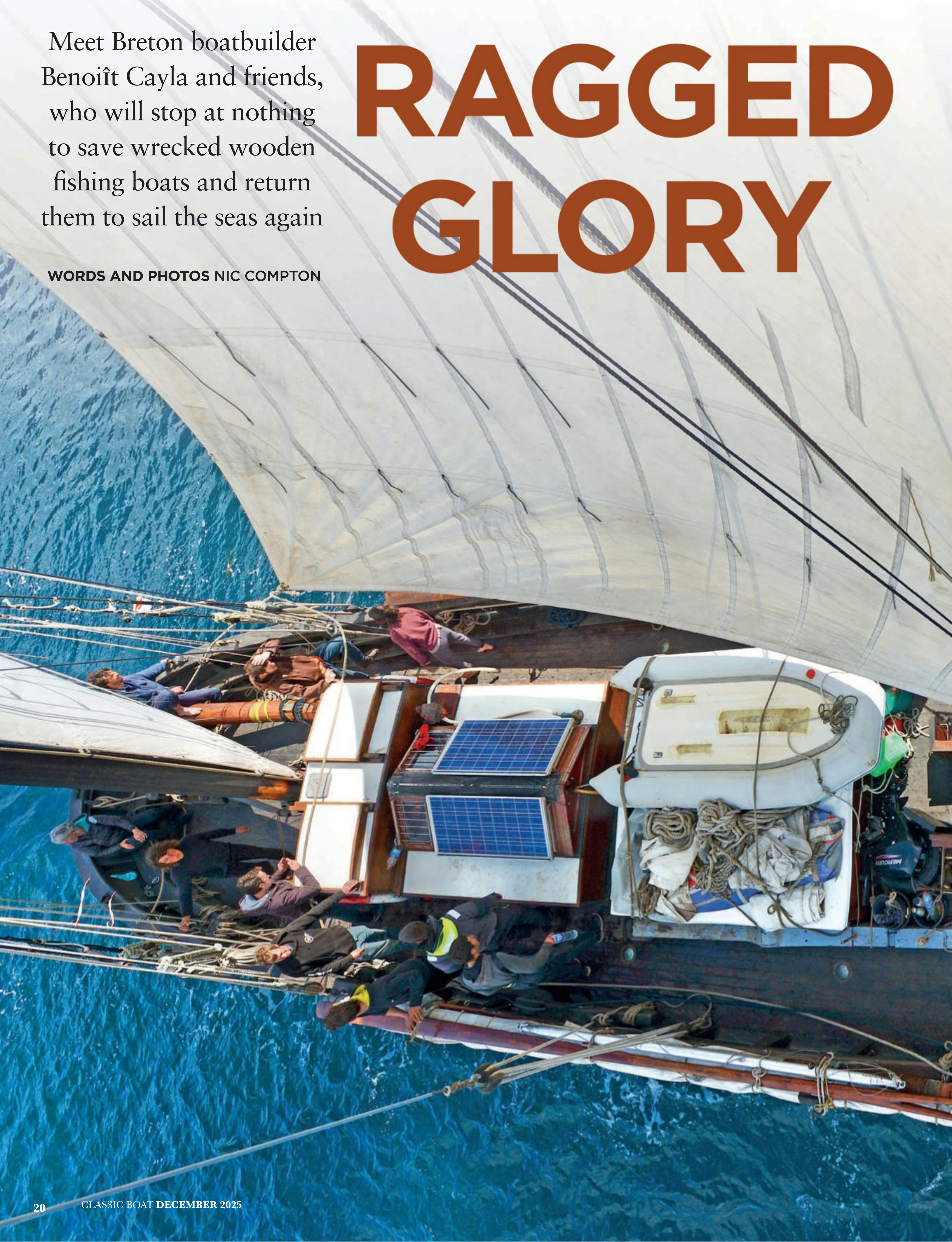
Devon £20,000

Another fascinating selection of traditional and classic yachts only from Wooden Ships. Call for true descriptions, genuine honest values and a service from people who know their boats.

RAGGED GLORY

Meet Breton boatbuilder Benoiît Cayla and friends, who will stop at nothing to save wrecked wooden fishing boats and return them to sail the seas again

WORDS AND PHOTOS NIC COMPTON



The 1926 ketch *Swallow* made an impressive sight charging around off the Cornish coast during the Sea Salts and Sail festival in Mousehole in 2024. At 55 tonnes, the boat needed a crew of 10 to hoist her sails and handle them once under way. Each tack, there was a call of *paré à virer* (ready about), as the bow of the boat swung through the eye of the wind, then an *oh-hisse!* (heave-ho!) as the crew heaved the jib and staysail sheets in with a block and tackle. Each new tack, the boat paused slightly, then heeled gently and gathered momentum, before settling down to a steady seven or eight knots. Not for nothing was this type of boat known as hajkutter (shark cutter) in its native Denmark – not because they caught sharks but because they were as voracious as sharks.

Skipper Élise Neau was a calm presence at the helm. She knows the boat well, having sailed her several times from France to Scotland and once to Norway and Denmark. She knows how to get the best out of a crew with mixed abilities and how to set nearly 3,000sqft of sail to harness the wind. But her most impressive manoeuvre came at the end of the day, when the racing was over and it was time to head into port. *Swallow* has no engine, but her crew turned down the offer of a tow into the famously small harbour. Instead, they hoisted the jib and mizzen and took a couple of tacks before they headed up into the wind and nosed through the 'mousehole'-sized entrance, lowering the sails at the last minute and letting the boat drift in under its own momentum. Once inside, they threw lines ashore to act as a brake and the boat came softly alongside another competitor moored at the quay. It was a masterful performance rewarded with applause from the watching crowd.

Later, I asked Élise what attracts her to this precarious lifestyle.

"The sea and the people," she told me. "The boat is just a tool to be with other people. To share with others. We have lots of friends and going sailing is an opportunity to be together. With a big crew like this, you have put your trust in others. Everyone is important. When each person finds their place, then it's great."

Above: Benoît at the helm of *Maggie Helen,* clearly showing a touch of weather helm

Below: *Maggie Helen* with St Michael's Mount behind

LOW TECH, HIGH AESTHETICS

Swallow was the second boat restored by Breton boatbuilder Benoît Cayla and friends Élise Neau and Bleuenn Chorlay. It started with the 1964 Loch Fyne skiff *Rose of Argyll*, which Benoît and a friend restored in 2004-09, followed by *Swallow* (ex-*Genara*) restored in 2011-21, and most recently the 1904 zulu *Maggie Helen* restored in 2022. In the process, the group has developed a distinctive approach to restoring old wooden boats that is both highly skilled and functional, respectful to tradition and yet not purist. You might say the boats are low-

tech but with a high aesthetic value, rustic rather than smart, in the way a log cabin is beautiful compared to a modern glass house.

I had joined the group in Mousehole to find out more. Brought up in Morlaix, in northern Brittany, Benoît trained as a furniture-maker before switching to boatbuilding. He and his friend Cyrille were looking for a boat to learn to sail on and were naturally drawn to wood. "We didn't have any money," he says, "so we bought a wreck."

Rose of Argyll was a replica of a traditional herring fishing boat from the west coast of Scotland. Designed by James McGruer (better known for his line of smart 8-Metre cruiser-racers), she was built at the James Adam & Son yard on the Clyde in 1964. After several decades cruising, the 33ft (10m) lugger ended up in a sorry state in the Golfe de Morbihan, on the west coast of France, which is where Benoît and Cyrille found her in 2004. They embarked on a five-year restoration with all the zeal of young converts, initially using only hand tools, though they acquired a few hand power tools along the way.

Above: Benoît and friends spent nine years rebuilding *Swallow*

Above right: Boatbuilder Élise Neau at the helm of *Swallow*

Below: Swallow's mainsail was cut from the old mainsail of the 19-M Fife *Mariquita*

"In the beginning, we tried to be more traditional," says Benoît. "We wanted nice sails, the correct fittings. But after a moment we realised it was too expensive to work in this way. We had to recycle and use the materials we had. We couldn't be purist. And really, I don't want to anyway. It's hard work if you always have to buy the exact right wooden block instead of maybe using a galvanised block which will work equally well."

Rose of Argyll proved an ideal boat to practise this approach and, once finished, the boat made a striking sight with her dipping lug rig with non-original mizzen topsail and bumpkin, her oiled timbers and her assortment of young crew on board. Who cared if it wasn't exactly what a Loch Fyne skiff would have looked like in the late 1800s? This was the 21st century, and it was enough that there was someone with the skills and imagination to bring an old wooden boat back to life and share the experience of sailing a traditional rig with another generation of young people.

After a year or two of sailing *Rose* around Brittany, Benoît and Élise started looking for a bigger boat to restore. During a visit to Falmouth, they heard about a Danish hajkutter being used as a houseboat on the beach at Penryn. By the time Benoît and friends reached *Swallow* she was in a sorry state and needed patching up just to get her moving again. Undeterred, they rigged up a jury engine and emergency rig and motored the decrepit boat across the English Channel to Brittany.

They started work on a beach on the Aber Wrac'h estuary but were soon told to move on by the local authorities. Instead, they found a home at the

BENOIT CAYLA

Association des Amis de Jeudi-Dimanche (AJD). Formed in 1951 by Jesuit priest Michel Jaouen, the organisation helps disadvantaged young people through a variety of programmes, including expeditions on their large schooners, the *Bel Espoir* and the *Rara Avis*. They also run a boatbuilding school on the coast at Lannilis, where *Swallow* soon became a part of the scenery.

The original idea was to restore a bit of the boat every winter and go sailing every summer. But after a couple of years, as the extent of the rebuild needed became apparent, Benoît realised that was impractical and that only an all-out approach would work. They were already working in conditions that would have horrified most people.

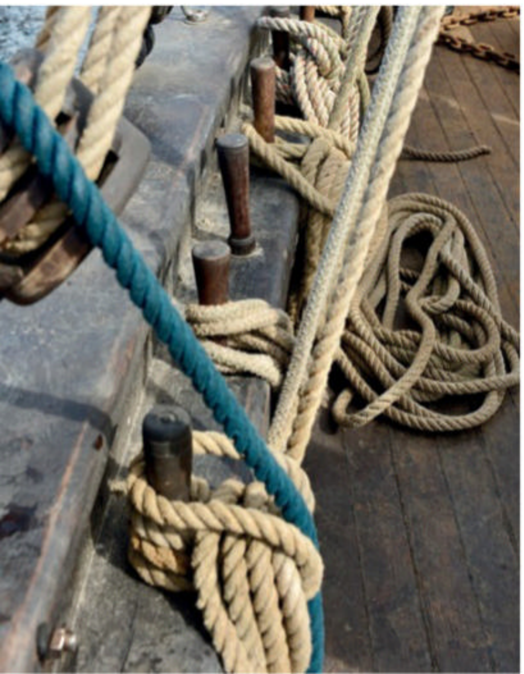
"The tide was coming in and out of the boat twice a day," remembers Benoît. "The boat was sinking. We tried to keep her afloat for the first two years, but when we started taking off the framing, all the planking moved and it was too much work to keep her floating. We went on board at low water to make the templates, and when the tide came in we went on shore to make the frames. After five years, she was floating again."

It was a massive undertaking, and they ended up replacing the stem, keelson, sternpost and rudder, as well as most of the framing, deck beams and planking. Benoît estimates they got through about 20 cubic metres of wood every year – mostly oak and a bit of larch – much of which ended up as wastage. Most of the fittings were recycled or bought secondhand, regardless of whether they were age-appropriate for a 1926 hajkutter. Even the mainsail was cut from the old mainsail of the 19-Metre yacht *Mariquita*, donated by a local sailmaker.

Finally, in June 2021, after nine years of hard graft, the boat was complete and they decided to go sailing, pandemic or no pandemic. They headed first to

Above: Photographer Nedjma Berder gets the bowsprit shot

Below: Even the belaying pins are elegantly shaped; Washing up en plein air; An old compass finds a new home



Above: Benoît and crew scull into Mousehole harbour

Above right: Swallow needs a big crew to handle the sails

Falmouth, then north to Ireland, Scotland, and on to Denmark, to lend a hand with the *Hawila* project, rebuilding a 114ft (34.7m) Baltic trader for sustainable cargo transport. But first they had to get past the Shetlands, where they were storm-bound for a week. While they were waiting, they went to the island's maritime museum, which is where they stumbled across their next project.

PLANS, PATTERNS & PROGRESS

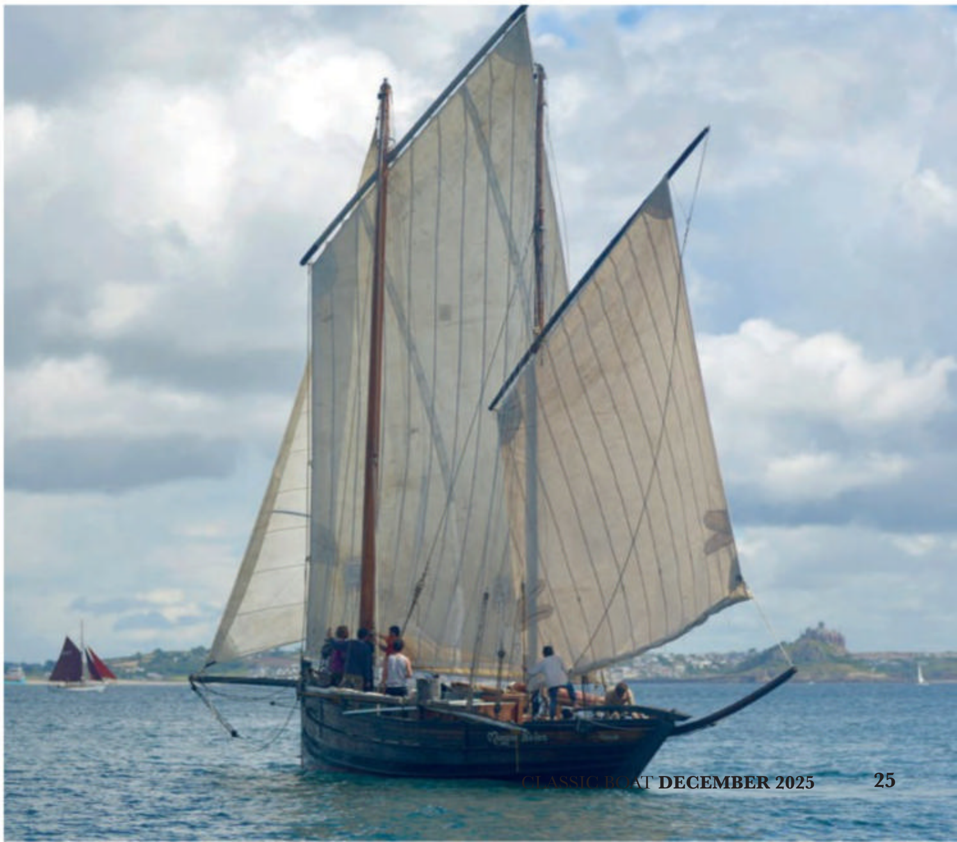
Maggie Helen was a 1904 zulu, built by Hay & Co in the very shed where she now sat as a museum exhibit. After nearly 50 years fishing, she had been converted into a yacht in 1952 with the addition of a bermudan schooner rig. Renamed *Loki*, she was sailed extensively around Shetland and to Scandinavia, eventually being converted to a motorboat. By 2007, she had been placed in the maritime museum at Lerwick and was partly restored over the next two years, until the funds ran dry. The museum's curator Ian Tait had searched far and wide for someone to take the boat off their hands, but the logistics of transporting the boat from the Shetlands had put everyone off. Until Benoît and his crew came along.

"At the beginning, nobody wanted it," says Benoît. "We had just finished *Swallow*, and they didn't want another project. But I had been interested in zulus for a long time, so for me it was a lucky chance. When we arrived in Denmark, I rang the museum and said, OK, I will come back in the spring and I will find a way. I didn't know how long it would take. I thought maybe I'd come back on my own and rebuild her slowly. Then I spoke to a few people, and many of them were enthusiastic to come back."

It must have seemed like a long shot, that a boatbuilder based 800 miles away would take on such a major project in such a remote location. But Benoît had a plan. While he was in Shetland the first time, he took patterns and measurements of the main parts that needed replacing, such as the bulwark stanchions, sheer clamp, sternpost, rudder, deck beams and coachroof. After sailing *Swallow* to Denmark and working on *Hawila* for a few weeks, he and some of his crew headed back to Brittany where, over the course of that winter, they pre-fabricated many of the parts, mostly using timber they had left over from *Swallow* and other projects. Come spring, they loaded up three vans with everything they needed and drove back to Denmark, where they loaded *Swallow* with seven tonnes of tools and materials they had gathered for the project.

The team arrived in Lerwick on 10 April 2022 and soon got to work. For three months, *Maggie Helen* was hive of activity, with up to 15 people working on

Below: Maggie Helen's Cornish lug rig is easier to handle than her original zulu rig



BENOIT CAYLA

Above: **The zulu *Maggie Helen*, the third restoration for the team, seen here sailing off Mousehole in 2024**

board 12 hours a day, seven days a week. They came from all over Europe – France, Holland, Italy, the UK – boatbuilders, riggers and mechanics, with varying degrees of skill. They worked for free because they believed passionately in the project and wanted to see the boat sailing again. Some hoped to go sailing on the boat once it was finished, while others were just passing through and enjoyed working with a group of like-minded people.

They weren't the only ones. After some initial scepticism about one of the island's historic craft being rebuilt by a bunch of foreigners and taken away from its home, the local community got behind the project and donated all manner of things – from lead for the ballast to the old mizzen mast that had been stored in someone's house. There were even cash donations to help feed the hungry workers.

To an outside observer, it might have all seemed a bit chaotic, anarchic even, but it was actually a highly focused operation that got the job done in remarkable speed. After three months of intensive work, this friendly enterprise achieved what a fully-funded professional yard would have struggled to pull off: they got *Maggie Helen* sailing again, for the first time in 60 years, and headed off over the horizon to a new life.

"The start of the work was hard," Bleuenn told a French magazine at the time. "After a month and a half, things are better, we have a plan. It's great to think that we're laying the frames now, and that in two months we'll be at the helm. That's what motivates me. I think about it all the time. A bit of sun, a little breeze, and that's it! It makes you want to go and fit some planking so you can sail. There are projects that can take ages; they run out of steam. But I know we'll soon be finished, we'll leave, and we'll find *Swallow* somewhere out at sea. It's going to be so beautiful."

MAD MAX-STYLE SAILING

And so it was. *Maggie Helen* left Lerwick in July, headed across the North Sea to Norway, where she joined *Swallow*, which had sailed on ahead with Élise at the helm and was working on a tour to raise awareness of climate change. The two boats spent that winter in Denmark before *Maggie Helen* sailed to her new home in Brittany the next year. Already, she had welcomed dozens if not hundreds of people on board.

Back in Mousehole, I joined *Maggie Helen* for the second day of the Sea Salts and Sail festival, with Benoît as skipper. There were seven crew on board that day, several of them newcomers like me, so not yet fully effective as crew. It wasn't the slickest operation, and the local luggers like the Manx nobby *Gladys* and the Looe lugger *Guide Me* swept around the course in a league of their own. Meanwhile, *Maggie Helen* looked like she had sailed straight out of a Mad Max movie: a breath-taking spectacle of how much can be achieved with very little.

Below: **Elle Demaus at the helm of *Maggie Helen***

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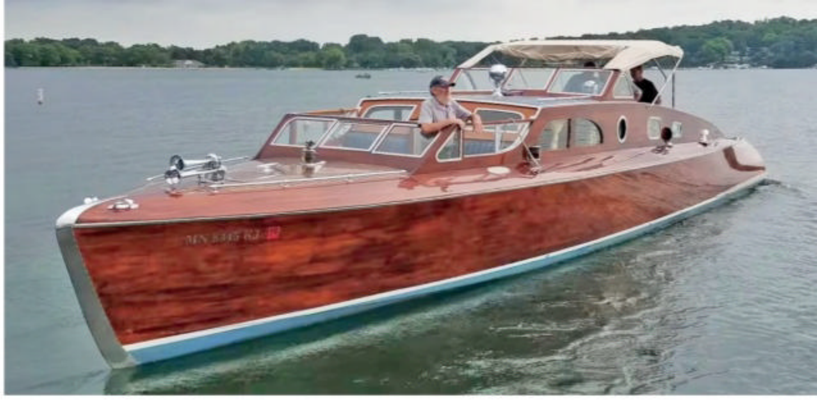
MECUM, USA

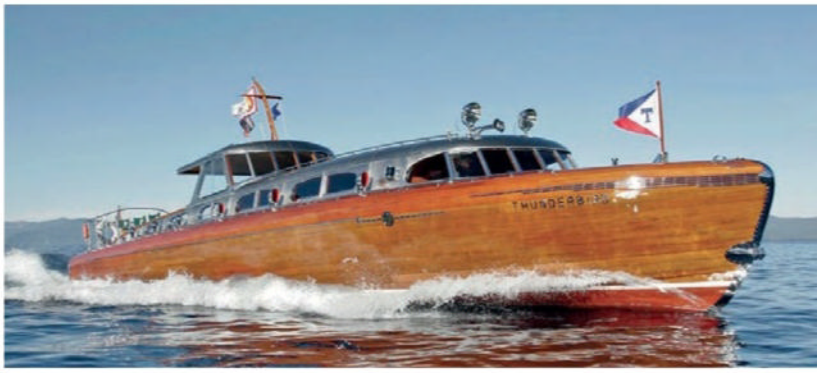
Hacker's high point

Detroit naval architect John Ludwig Hacker (1877-1961) pushed the limits of speed and style on water with pioneering v-hull planing racers that evolved into the glamourous high-speed runabouts that were a defining statement of the roaring twenties and beyond.

In 1937 Hacker scaled new heights with the 54ft (16.5m) commuter express Wee Joe II, built for cinema magnate Joe Cooper at a cost of $75,000. With double-planked Honduran mahogany on steamed white-oak frames, the twin aero-engined flyer scythed across the lakes at up to 50 knots, and in turn inspired Hacker's most extravagant creation, Thunderbird, commissioned in 1940 by millionaire bon-vivant George Whittell to keep at his Lake Tahoe lodge. Thunderbird also survives to this day.

Wee Joe II, now powered by twin Crusader big-block V8s, sold recently for $1.75m. With inflation factored in, that's almost exactly equivalent to her build cost in 1937.





Hacker's exquisite craft were regarded as "the Steinway of runabouts." Wee Joe II (top) provided the template for Thunderbird (above), which featured a stainless-steel cabin top to resemble the owner's DC2 aircraft. A later owner who up-engined her in the 1960s described Thunderbird as his "70mph cocktail lounge"

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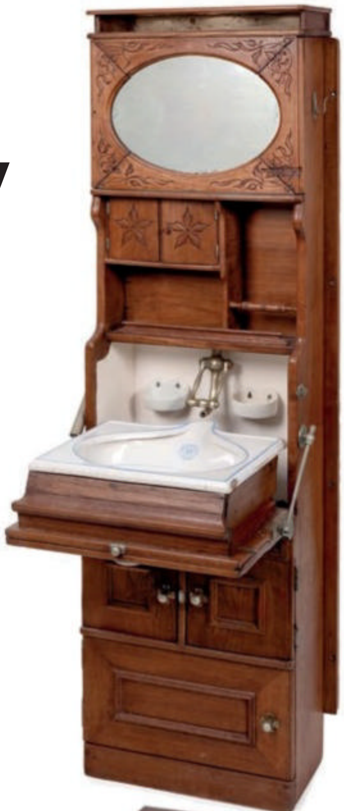
Clever cabinetry



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Today's beleaguered work-from-home rabbit-hutch city-dwelling incel singletons could do well to spurn Ikea and look to naval architecture for space-saving ideas, such as this clever compact washstand (estimated at £600-800) from an 1890s German liner. Just 69in (175cm) tall and a mere 10.5in (26.5cm) deep it houses a fold down basin, water tank and storage for grooming products, Pot Noodles and both your pairs of boxer shorts. With the basin folded away a drop-down writing slope creates a lap-top workstation. All it lacks is built-in wi-fi and a USB port.

More up-scale is this 18th century transformable writing table (right) that doubles in size for intimate dining, in the unlikely event that you ever meet anyone. It also comes with a built-in anecdote, as it was owned by an admiral who wrote letters to Nelson on it. Unfortunately, that pitches at £3,000-5,000.

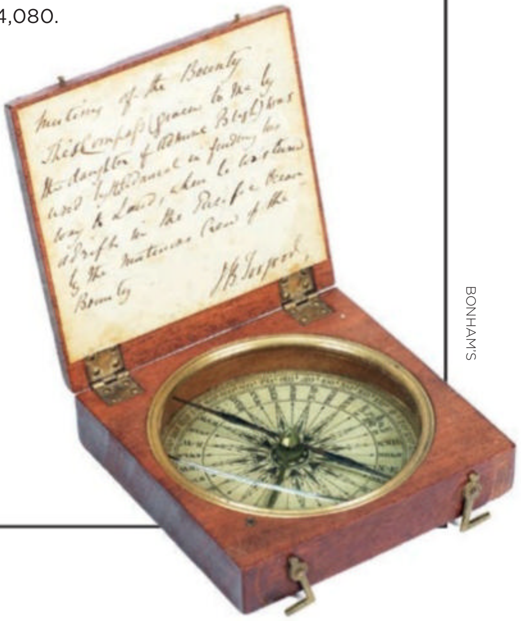
BONHAMS

Bligh's compass flogged

The perception of William Bligh as a hard-driving tyrant owes more to popular culture than to history. He rose through the ranks on merit, not patronage, and was a bit sweary, but also lenient, with a record of flogging below the Royal Navy average, and less than that of Captain James Cook, who was revered for his compassion and considered a "people person."

Yet when cast adrift in the infamous mutiny on the Bounty in April 1789 Bligh proved his mettle as a phenomenal navigator. With a sextant but no charts, a pocket watch that soon failed and a pocket compass he piloted the overcrowded 7m (23ft) ship's boat with 19 aboard across the Pacific for 3,618 nautical miles over 47 days to safety in Timor. Although it's not possible to positively affirm that this (below) is that actual compass, an inscription relating to Bligh and the munity boosted its value to £14,080.

Hand-written inscription reads: "This compass given to me by the daughter of Admiral Bligh was used by the Admiral in finding his way to land, when he was turned adrift in the Pacific Ocean by the mutinous crew of the Bounty." At the time of the mutiny Bligh was a lieutenant and finished his naval career as vice admiral



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Christian Carleton used Epifanes varnish over CPES on *Taurus* (pictured right) in 1991. He writes:

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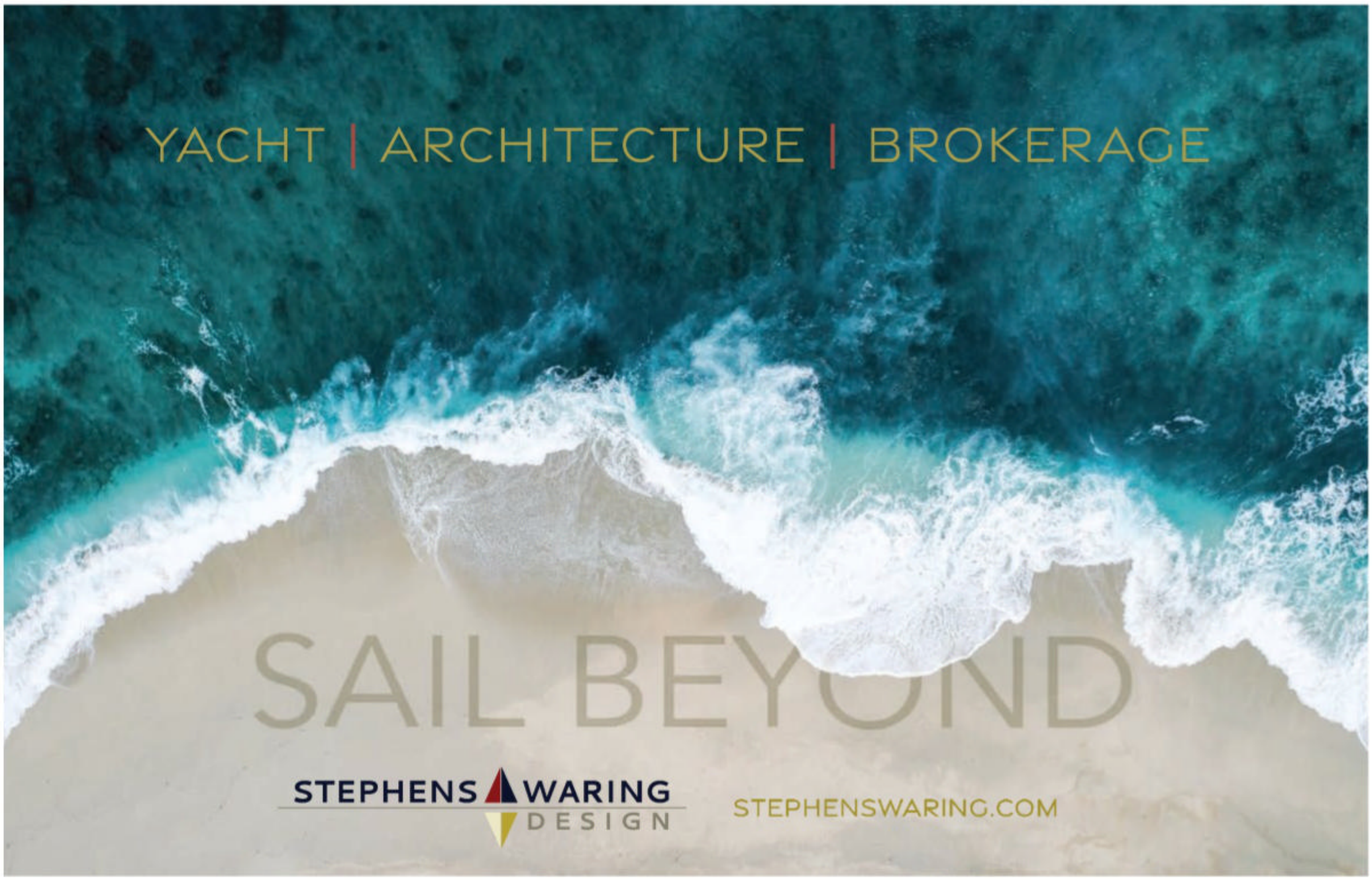
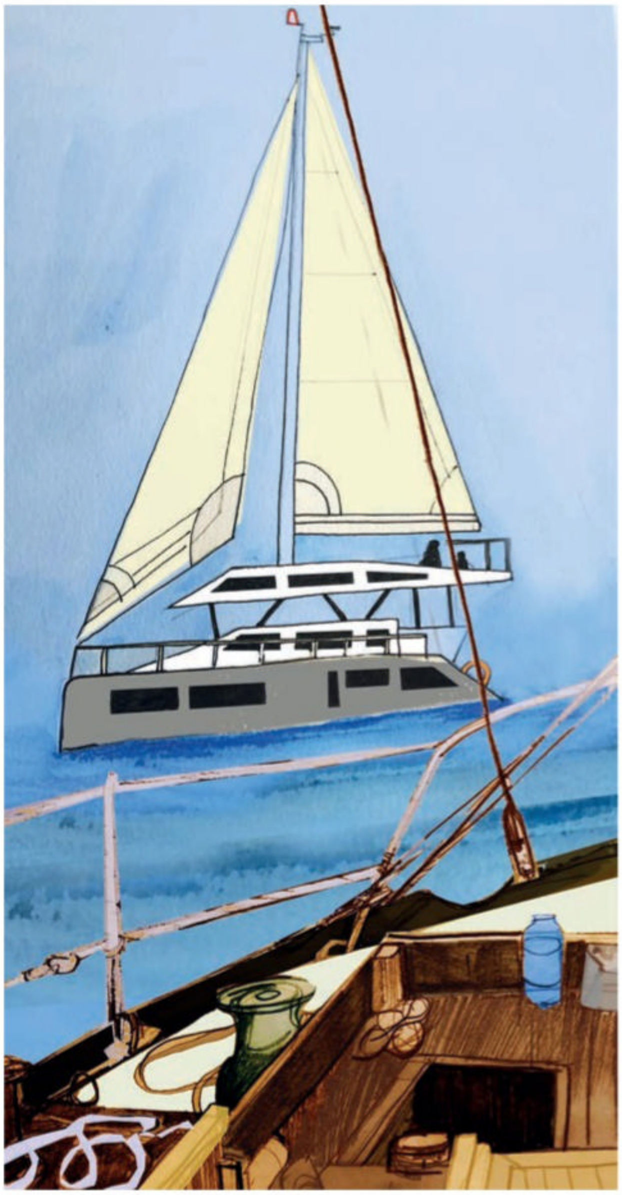


Adrian Morgan

Peak ugliness

But they said that about Britannia too...



CHARLOTTE WATTERS

Fortunately there is no law against slandering, or rather slagging off, sailing boats. You can be as rude as you like, the only ones taking offence will be their owners who, like dog owners, will hear nothing bad about their unruly labradoodle. For: "He won't bite, once you get to know him, he's quite docile," while straining at the leash, read: "We ballasted her by the stern and the weather helm has all but disappeared," tiller round their ears. They'll be adding a bowsprit next.

These days computer simulation can predict how heeled hull shapes will behave; no need for Admiral Turner's treatise on metacentric balance, the favourite method of one Dr Harrison Butler, when designing a new production boat. And with so many destined to emerge from the mould, post-launch snagging will hopefully be no more than moving the jib cars back a notch. It may even have two rudders, presumably designed to halve any weather helm (but then I am no designer.)

Well, what's the fun in that? *Sally* and I spent years together adjusting ballast, inside, outside, raking her mast, finding the lightest engine, and putting it as far forward as possible, but went too far one day, off Osborne House. Having added rather too much lead, she dipped her foredeck into the swell from a large Sunseeker. Alas, at that moment the dark, sleek, shiny and newly washed locks of our friend Lucy, along for the day, fresh from drying out – she'd taken a dip in the Hamble to retrieve a fender – emerged from the forehatch. The split second it took her to process my: "Watch out! Green water!" was too long. To add to the insult, the fender she'd retrieved, which we'd have added to our collection, had been unchivalrously claimed by a yacht further downstream. How annoying is that?

There may be more balanced boats these days, but my goodness, some of them are pretty ugly, if you forgive the contradiction. By and large we classic boat aficionados can, more often than not, albeit wet, cold and pumping for England, sneer inwardly as another Average White Boat ranges up astern. Glancing at the new boats at Southampton this year struck me how we may have reached peak ugliness, which clearly coincides with peak headroom, interior volume, berthing and peak ablutionary facilities. Designers, ever beholden to the boating buyers, appear to have cast aside all sense of aesthetics in favour of comfort. Understandably, or they'd be poor, unemployed designers.

"Designers, beholden to buyers, have cast aside all aesthetics."

Much is down to fashion: exaggerated chines, reverse sheer, clipper bows, Dreadnought bows, rolled decks and bonded windows – as many as you can fit, as if this were a floating conservatory. I won't name names but the French seem particuarly involved. I recently saw an example with a mezzanine roof terrace and what looked like a small summerhouse at the back. But then the French – remember the Citroen 2CV and Traction Avant – have always done things differently and have often been proven right once the rest of the world has caught up.

You have to be careful about this slagging off business, however smug it makes you feel in your elegant classic with the perfect sheer, impeccable manners and, minimal headroom. Years ago I saw the prototype of Garry Hoyt and Halsey Herreshoff's cat ketch Freedom 40, in Antigua. Wraparound sails, stepped deck profile, unstayed masts and a vast cabin, with aft-facing windows – like the stern cabin on a man'o war. The late David Pelly, then deputy editor of *Yachting World* described it as a "wardrobe chasing two windsurfers" – he had a way with words that occasionally got him into deep water. The first Freedom turned out to be both practical and fast, if not particularly close-winded, and popular, spawning a series of smaller Freedoms, one of which is owned by CB's former editor Nic Compton.

And as if to prove that beauty is in the eye etc, consider that in 1893, as HMY *Britannia* slid into the Clyde off Hendersons yard, onlookers were struck not by her beauty but her "gratuitously ugly bow", before the year was out, and after a string of racing successes, reconsidered the crowning glory of what came to be known as the "Britannia ideal".

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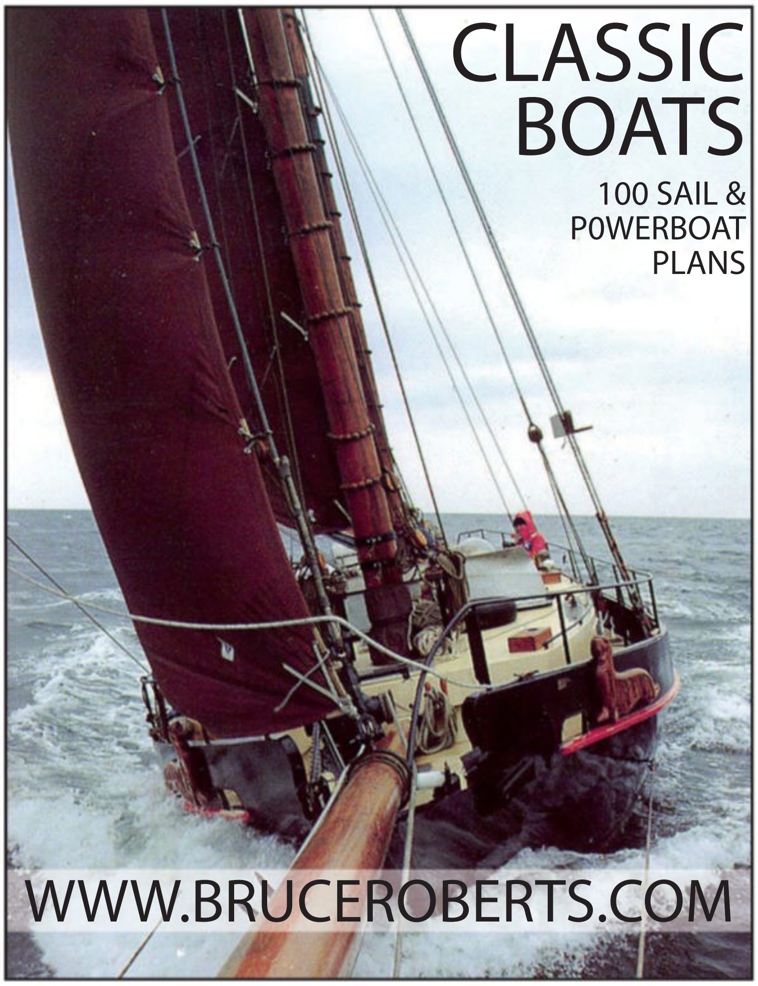
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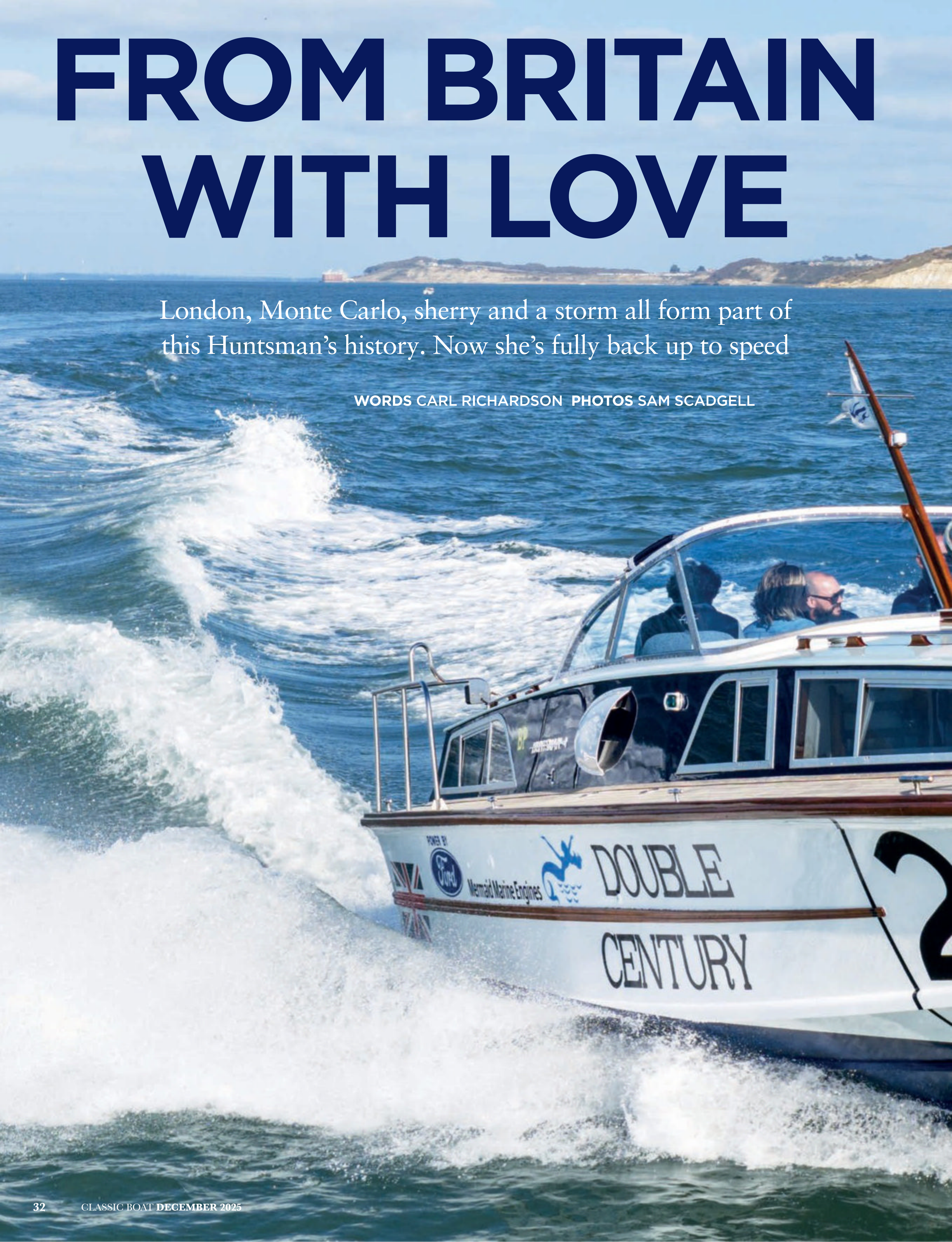
FROM BRITAIN WITH LOVE

London, Monte Carlo, sherry and a storm all form part of this Huntsman's history. Now she's fully back up to speed

WORDS CARL RICHARDSON **PHOTOS** SAM SCADGELL


POWER BY
Ford
Mermaid Marine Engines
DOUBLE
CENTURY
2

200
DOUBLE CENTURY
POWER BY
Ford
Mermaid Marine Engines
HUNTSMAN
BP

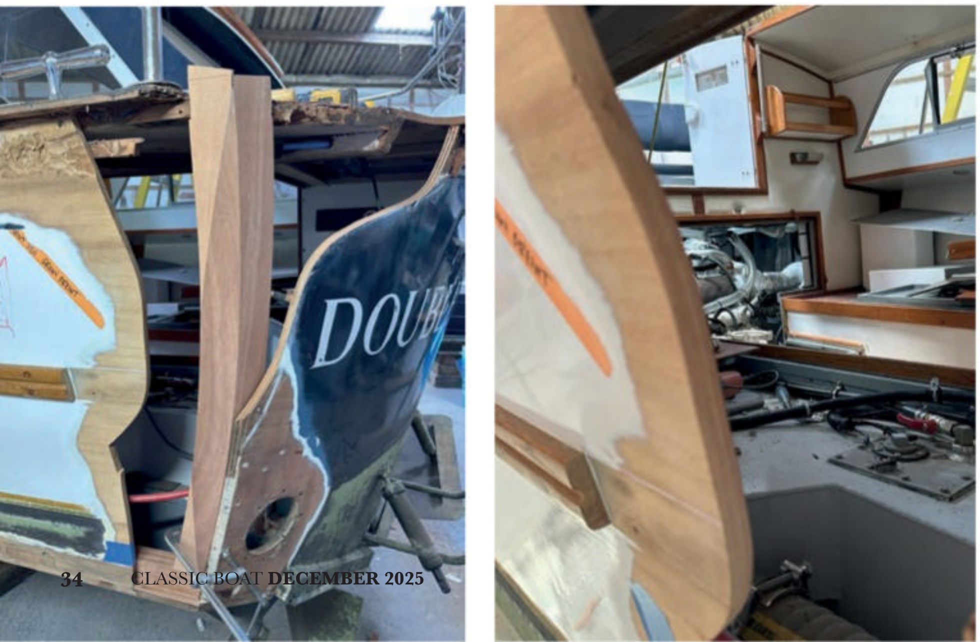
Above: Cruising at an easy 25 knots

Double Century not only represents the halcyon days of British powerboat design but also a period when wonderfully adventurous things still regularly happened through little more than collective will, as opposed TV rights or sovereign wealth funds. Peter Twiss was the epitome of these times, a person who held the world air speed record in a Fairey Delta, sold and raced its boats and would probably help you with your fuel filters. It was fun, it was messy, and it was very real.

So it was that this period saw the idea of a 14-day, 2,700-mile race from London to Monte Carlo take shape. It probably could only have happened then. A good 1,000 miles further than the Round Britain Powerboat Race, nothing of the like had been tried before and, in fairness, it probably only happened because BP stood the fuel bill for the entire fleet. It would be another 40 years before it would be tried again, only to fail through a lack of funding and, possibly, an outbreak of common sense. Of the 27 boats that started the 1972 race, only 10 finished. All of this serves to demonstrate the racing heritage and sheer prowess of *Double Century*, named after her race number – 200. This Huntsman 31 would finish the race to Monaco sixth overall, collect seven awards, rescue five people and still return an average speed of 25 knots running on a pair of standard-fit 180hp Fords.

There is also something slightly eccentric and quite British about *Double Century* doing all of this while being, ostensibly, an aft-cabin cruiser. But, of course, this is no ordinary cabin cruiser, it's a Fairey.

This is where *Double Century's* current custodian, Nick Whittle, comes into the frame. Nick specialises in classic yacht restoration, his tidy, tucked-away yard in Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, housing X One Designs and lots of Faireys – not a bad combination of great sail and power design to specialise in. He has restored a good dozen Faireys so far and looks after a similar amount. In short, he was the right person for the job that would present itself.

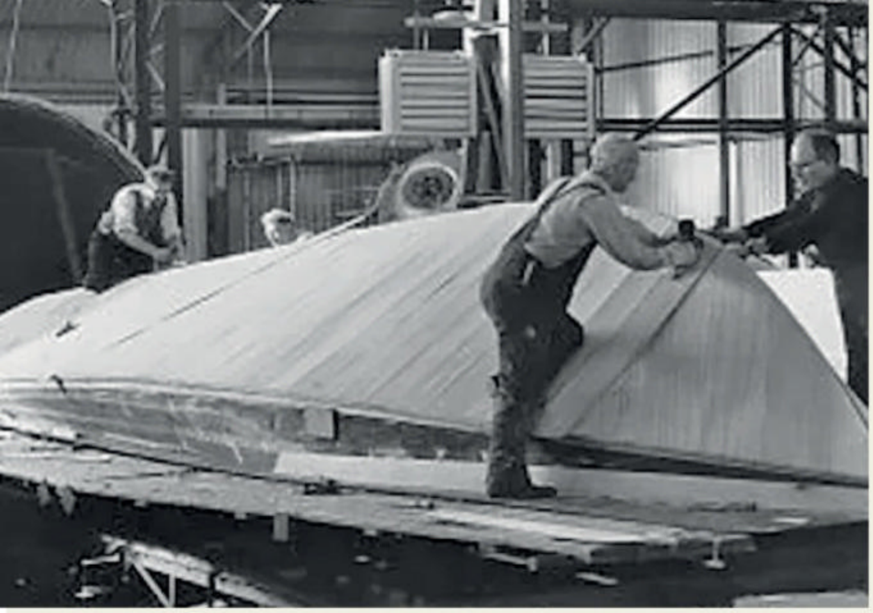


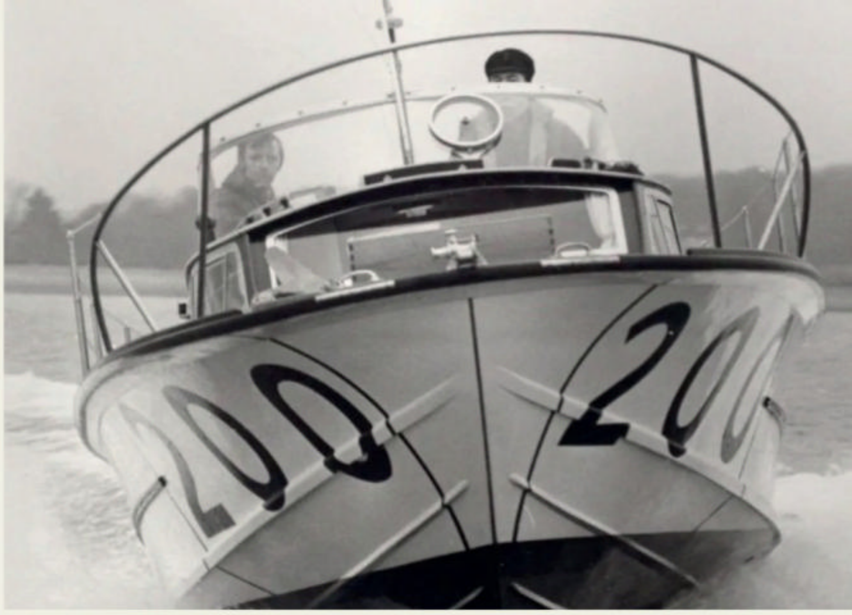
Below: The storm damage was cut away and replaced with with new side and transom laminates and feathered in

SEEING DOUBLE

Nick had long known of *Double Century* and her exploits, admiring the boat from afar. Storm Debi would change that proximity. Debi made landfall in November 2023, with 77mph winds hammering the coast of Wales and northern England. On Lake Windermere, *Double Century* lay at her berth, the former racer quietly enjoying a freshwater retirement. Then the storm hit.

"It could have been considerably worse" says Nick. "Two of the portside cleats were ripped out of the deck, leaving the boat to smash herself against the pontoon through the height of the gale. You could see into the boat through the hole in the port quarter." A subsequent sale brought *Double Century* within reach and Nick was ready. "I knew this boat's story and that of her original owner, David Palengat, and had even spoken to his son. David ordered this Huntsman 31 in 1971 with the express purpose of racing the boat offshore. Fairey Marine were very supportive and put

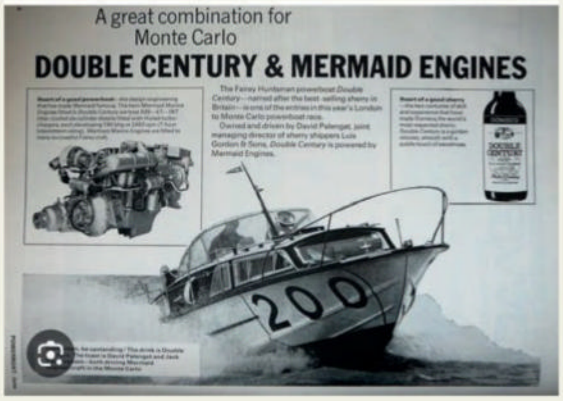




Fairey Huntsman 31: Cruiser|Racer|Legend

Fairey's Anglo-American routes stem from a long relationship with Ray Hunt that predates its early powerboats. Hunt's sailing boat designs were proven winners. His approach to motorboats was ground-breaking: a deep-vee hull that kept its deadrise all the way to the transom. It required more horsepower but revolutionised fast powerboat design in the 50s and beyond. Hunt's work was beautifully realised and used by Alan Burnard for Fairey, starting with the 23ft (7m) Huntress. The 31 was a development of the Huntsman 28, enjoying an extra 10in (25cm) in the beam with a new, beautifully flared bow that would continue on all later models. The whole package created a faster, drier boat that also delivered decent accommodation for the times, with most of the 31s built with an aft cabin. Some 33 Huntsman 31s were built, including six aft cockpit Sport models, using the hot-moulded method pioneered in wartime aviation production.

Early Huntsman 31s used the same twin 145hp Perkins diesels as the 28, for close to 30-knot performance, before moving to the 180hp Ford Sabre or Mermaid turbo diesels that powered the 31 past 30 knots, even with *Double Century's* increased fuel load and build. Later models were offered with twin 215hp and 225hp Fords.



A great combination for
Monte Carlo

DOUBLE CENTURY & MERMAID ENGINES

The Fairey Huntsman powerboat *Double Century*—named after the best-selling sherry in Britain—is one of the entries in this year's London to Monte Carlo powerboat race.

Owned and driven by David Palengat, joint managing director of sherry shippers Luis Gordon & Sons, *Double Century* is powered by Mermaid Engines.

Clockwise from top left: **The hot-moulded process underway at Fairey's Hamble yard; Sea trials and testing ahead of the race with David Palengat at the helm, overseen by Mermaid Marine's Peter Pearce; A 1972 advert showcasing the collaborative times; Bob Palengat (centre) adjusts the lines in Porto, Portugal; The crew of race boat 200 relaxing after the race; David and business associate Pedro Domecq after the Almeria to Alicante leg**

Mermaid Marine Engines

CENTURY
COWES

Above: Incredible planning and attention to detail ended with hand-painted livery; Nick Whittle talks the author through the refit works at his Yarmouth yard

him in touch with Mermaid Marine's John Pearce who, with his brother Peter, would go on to become *Double Century's* engineer and navigator."

Palengat sounds like another exemplar of the times. His race preparations were intense, with detailed time trials and testing in Southampton Water. The Pearce brothers' input was invaluable. Fuel reserves, the propping of the boat and an extensive spares list, were all balanced against performance. The results speak for themselves. Nick's work has been no less impressive, with a forensic level of investigation and accuracy poured into the project. "Through the Fairey Owners Club, I'm very fortunate to have access to an incredible archive of documents, press cuttings and photographs focussing on *Double Century* and the London to Monte Carlo Race." These would all come into play throughout the restoration.

After the London to Monaco race, *Double Century* returned to Britain and appears to have been well looked after, with six known owners keeping her, predominantly in the Solent area, before the move to the lakes. Unlike many of the boats featured in these pages, no tragedies befell the boat (if we discount a name change by one owner to *Sherry Baby* that allegedly caused Palengat a few sleepless nights) until that 2023 storm.

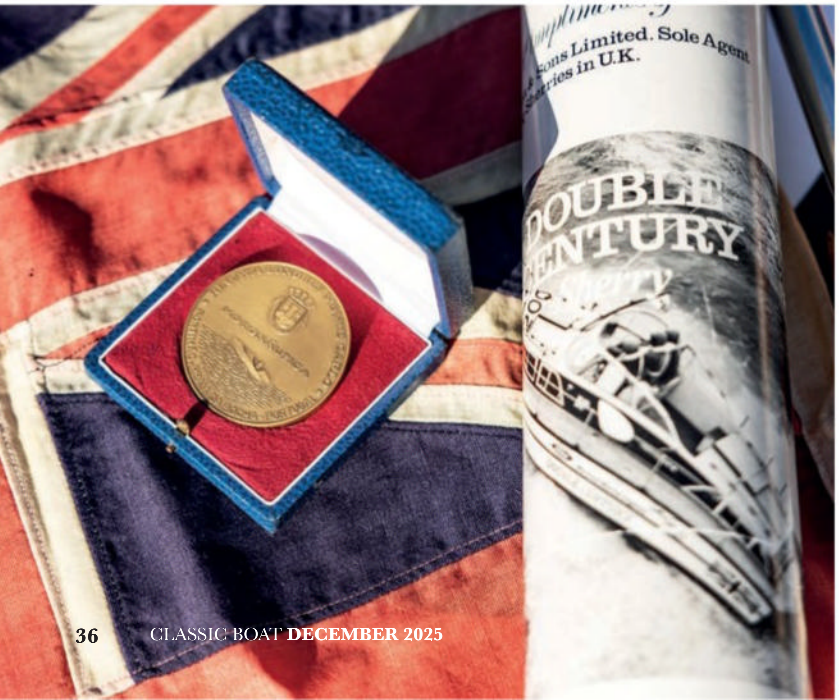
BACK TO LIFE AND LIVERY

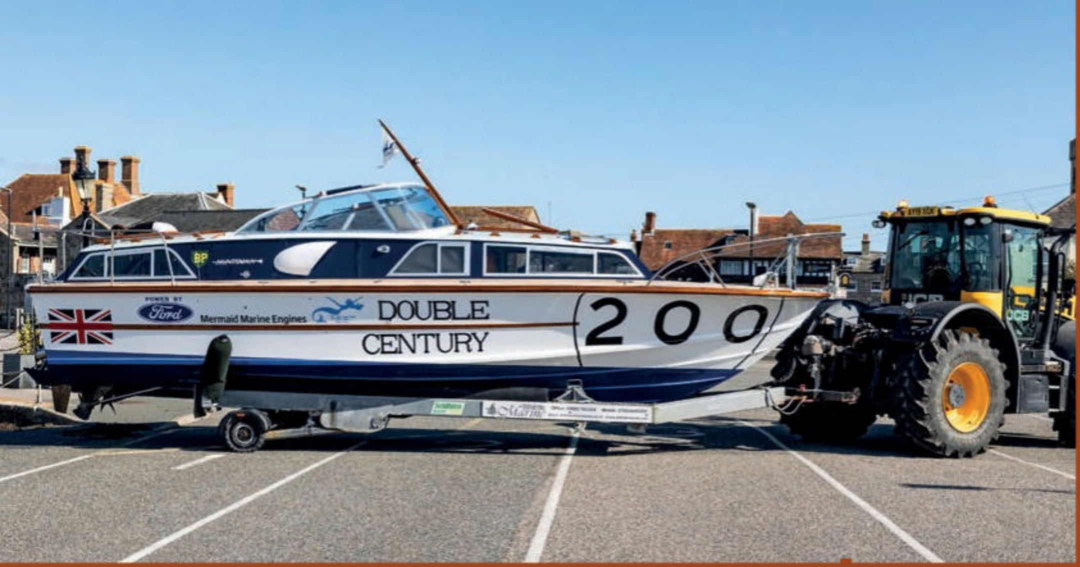
Backed up by good ownership, the overall condition of the boat looked positive on arrival at Whittle's yard, apart from the smashed port quarter. Nick was not going to take any chances. The refit began by completely stripping back the paintwork, deck fittings, windows and most of the interior, creating a bare, hot-moulded canvas to work from.

"The boat's port quarter, and a section of the transom and fashion piece were replaced, with the original seven veneers on the transom replaced, stepped in and fanned out. A standard Huntsman has seven 2.5mm veneers below the waterline and five for the topsides. We discovered this boat's race build had nine layers below the waterline and seven above. Not surprisingly, the hull was in good condition, but I wanted to go all the way back and do the job properly."

Once the main works were complete and the boat's structural integrity confirmed, attention turned to the finish and the original eye-catching livery. "Using colour photography, we matched that pale blue Fairey paint, which has a hint of green in it, rather than being a duck-egg. Awlgrip were brilliant, working with us to create exactly the right tone." The result is impressive, a simple, if hard fought, element that adds a genuine,

Below: An original London to Monte Carlo finisher's medal – there were very few required – with accompanying sherry case; Nick proudly holds *Double Century*'s original race ensign

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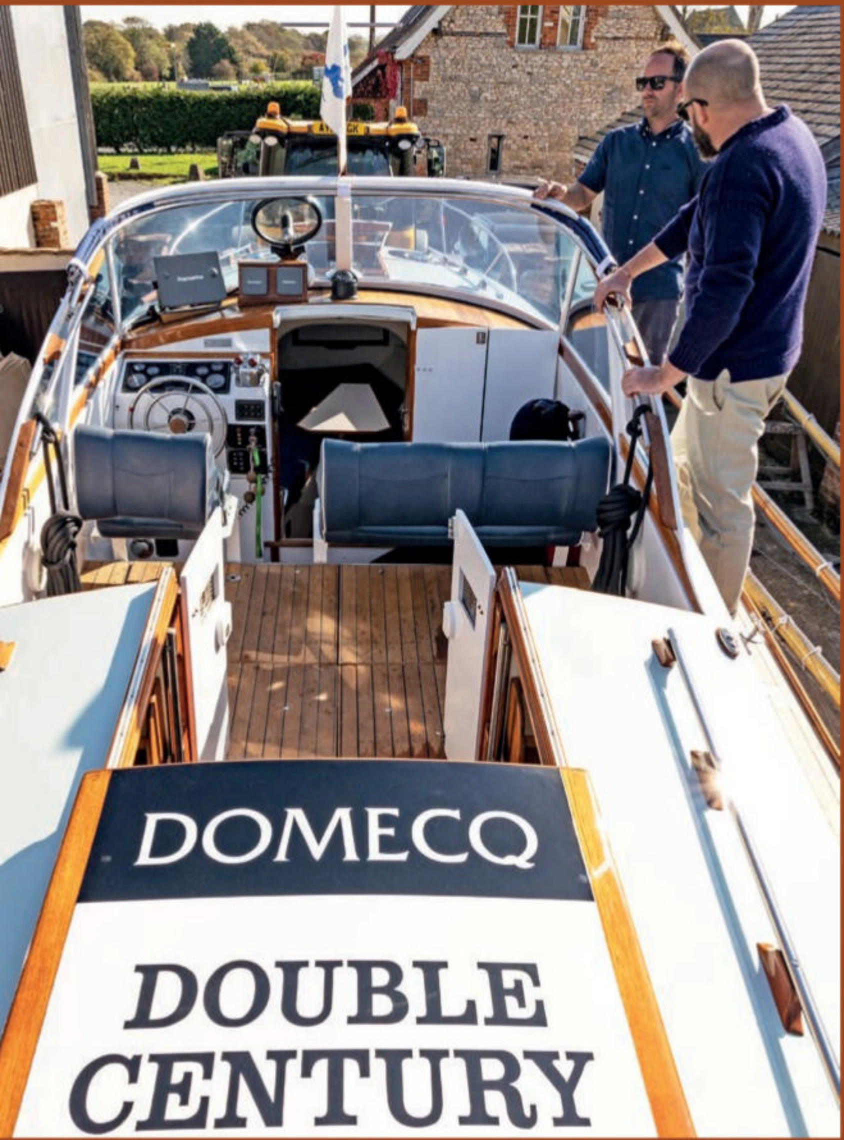
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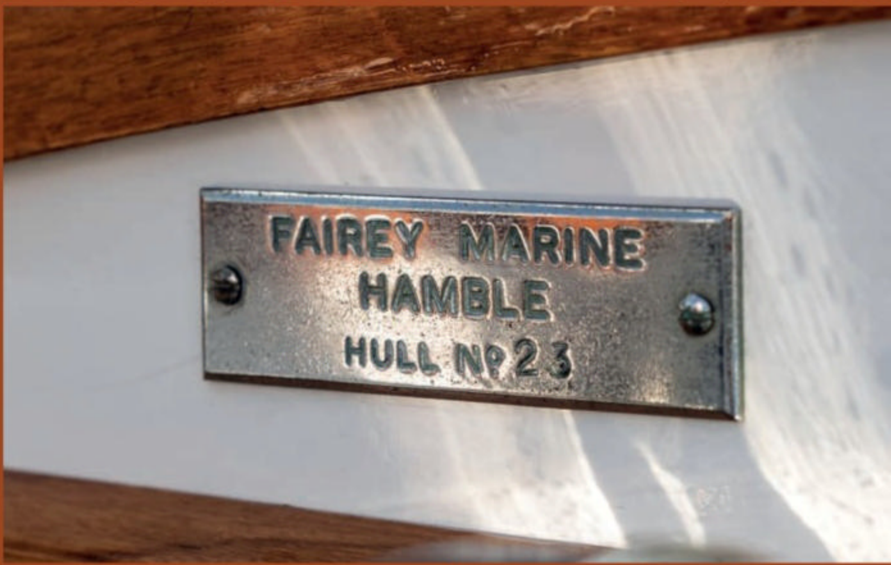
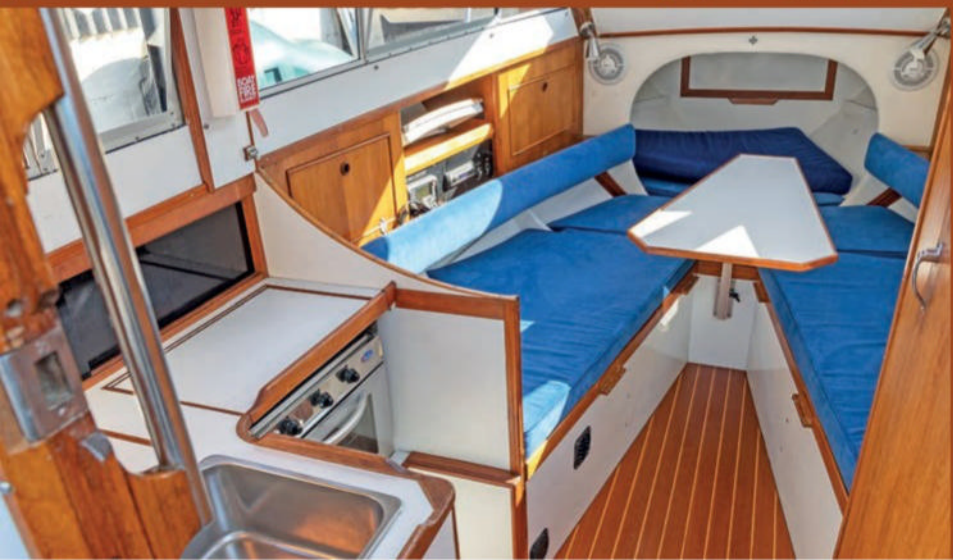
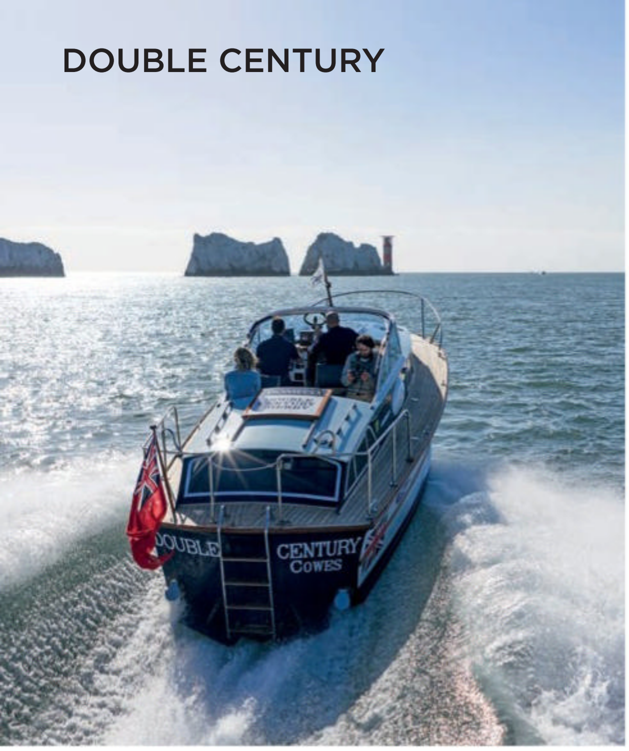

FAIREY MARINE
HAMBLE
HULL No 23



Clockwise from top left: Double Century's novel launch system in Yarmouth Harbour; The 200 race number proudly and exactly crowns the coachroof; A pleasure to drive; Build number; Aft cabin; Bright and quite original main cabin; The Huntsman's cockpit with recessed helm, navigator's seats and that iconic curved screen



200
DOMECQ
DOUBLE CENTURY SHERRY

Above: Great from every angle, even better from on board

Oppsite page: The Ray Hunt-derived deep-vee hull cuts deep and has left its mark on powerboat design

historic value to the boat. Next came the iconic race livery. "Palengat was joint managing director of Luis Gordon & Sons, importers of Domecq Double Century Dry Sherry, and the story goes that a case of the sherry was used to procure the 200 race number." Whittle's Blaise Russel and Mike Chambers worked tirelessly with Nick to hand paint the livery and logos. "We used every image we could find to correctly position the livery, even copying the same errors in the original logo spacing when deck fittings got in the way."

From every angle this boat looks exciting, even above. Nick found the original race scrutineering book, so the number on the coachroof exactly matches up, as does the whip aerial sat on an old lifeboat's base. He recalls seeing the exterior finished: "Once the livery went on, I just thought 'this boat is looking so cool!' It's turning into something unlike anything else."

TO EXPERIENCE IS TO KNOW

In Fairey terms, we cheated on the test day. Scheduling an October Solent test should safely deliver wind and chop. We received six knots and a glassy calm sea, not what these boats are designed for. The Ray Hunt-derived hull form is a genuine deep vee, 20 degrees at the transom, giving you a smooth ride in exactly the kind of choppy offshore waters you usually get around the British Isles.

There is a real joy to how the Hunt/Barnard hull banks and cuts through the sea, somehow being both planted and nimble at the same time. The feedback at the helm is instant and intuitive, involving the skipper, instilling confidence. *Double Century* has been re-engined with 280hp six-cylinder FPT N67 turbo diesels, based on Iveco blocks, and with an extra 200hp on tap compared to the original race spec, power is impressive. The shift from 20 to 30 knots is effortless and a top speed of around 35 knots backs up the race creds, although you get the feeling Nick would much rather have those original Mermaids still sat on their beds.

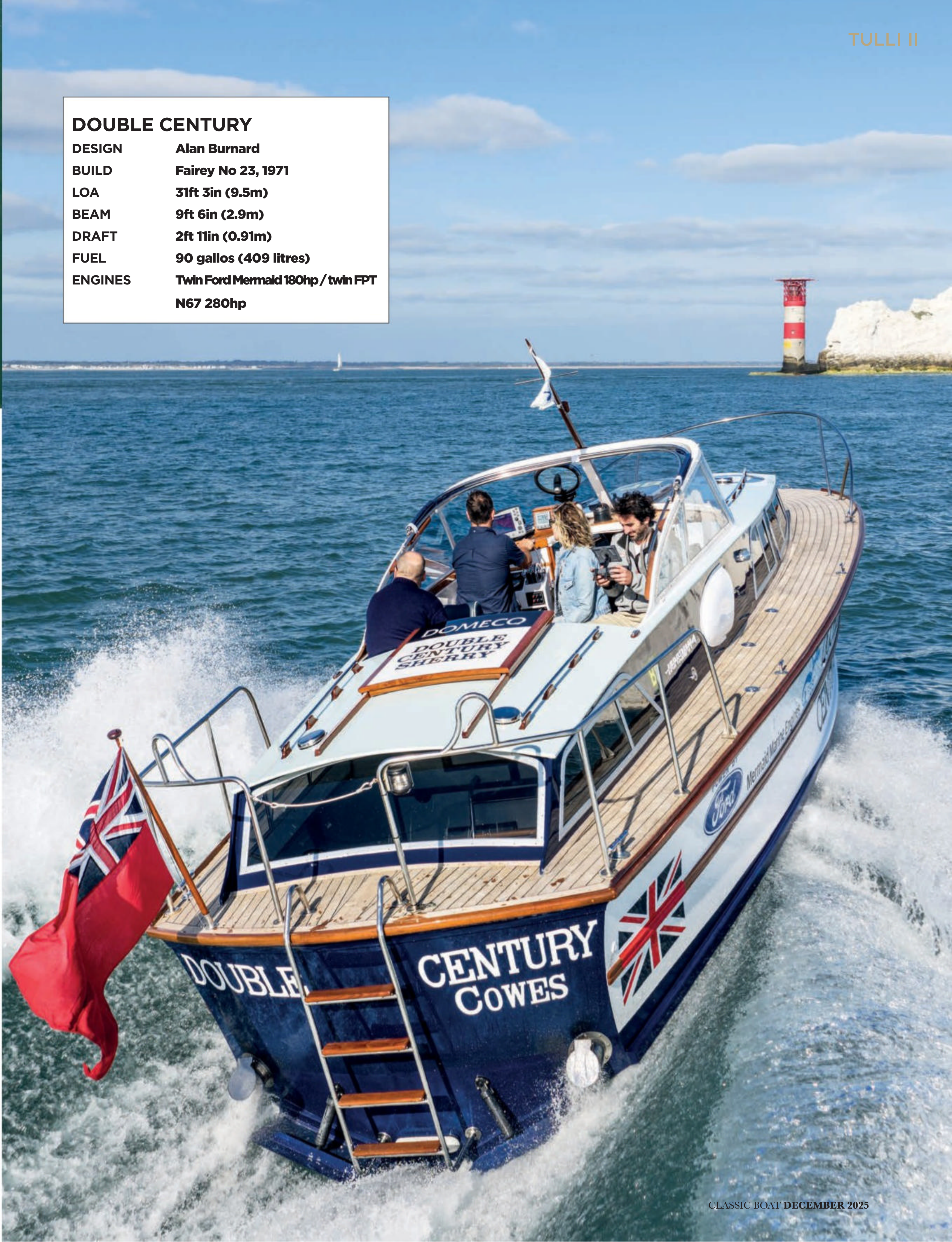
The only reason all fast cruisers don't look and handle like a Huntsman is the need for interior accommodation, that same deep vee ultimately limiting beam and so volume by modern standards. Now, some may want more room on board and if that is the case there is no point trying to argue the Huntsman's case. The answer is unavoidable… you buy a bigger, beamier 33ft (10m) Fairey Swordsman instead.

Double Century's interior is bright and unfussy, delivered in near-original style and specification, with the forward dinette dropping into a big double berth. There's a small galley and a heads to remind us that not everything in the 60s was great. The bonus from an ownership perspective comes aft, with another twin-bunked cabin that makes cruising with family and friends a convivial possibility.

THE NEXT ADVENTURE

As all classic owners will attest to, no boat is ever really finished, even one as clearly finished as this one. Nick still has a few jobs he wants to address, including a new teak deck (teak procured, cut and ready to lay) and finding some original helm and navigator seats. The latter will help with another objective. "We want to take the boat back to Monaco; to see her in the port would be incredible. I don't know if that's retracing the 1972 race route or heading through the canals some of the way. I've already had a good few offers to crew the coastal route." One look at this boat tells you it is ready to take on the challenge.

Back in the harbour, we looked through the original race images and documents Nick has compiled during this two-year project, he brings out a small box. Inside is a handsome gold disc, not shiny, nor opulent but a noble, understated, solid thing. It is an original race medal, handed out to every finisher. This one was given to Clive Ashton, mechanic on another Ford-powered boat, *Nautiford*, finishing fourth. Clive's son, Guy, lent it to Nick as part of his ongoing work to investigate the 1972 race. I don't know how much the racers of the time cared for such things, but it seems a fitting award for those heroically altruistic times and a symbolic nod to Nick's own work.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SHERRY
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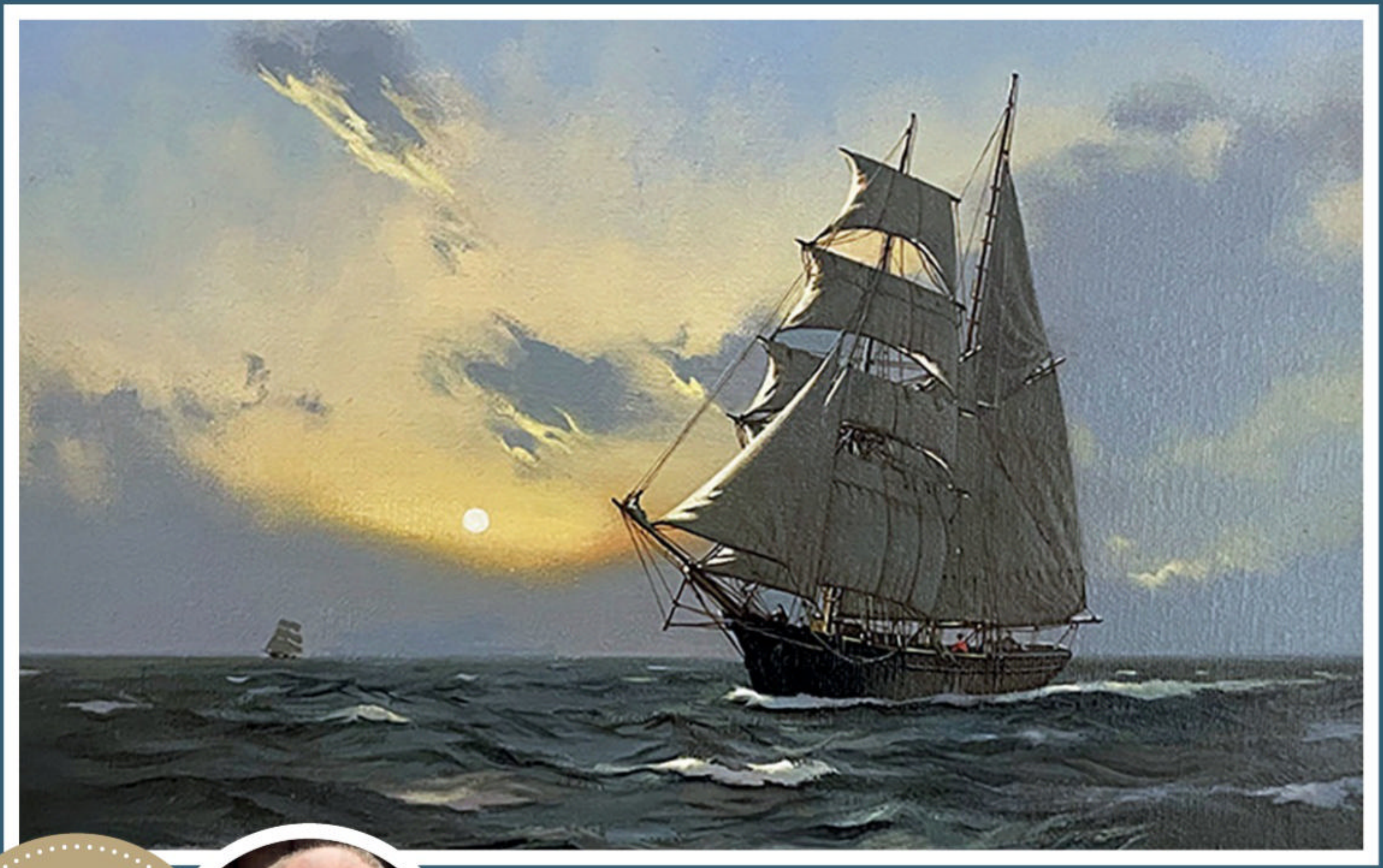
DOUBLE CENTURY

DESIGN	Alan Burnard
BUILD	Fairey No 23, 1971
LOA	31ft 3in (9.5m)
BEAM	9ft 6in (2.9m)
DRAFT	2ft 11in (0.91m)
FUEL	90 gallos (409 litres)
ENGINES	Twin Ford Mermaid 180hp / twin FPT N67 280hp



***Clear seas, the* Alpha**
By James Brereton, oil on canvas board 31 x 25cm, £1,700

WINNER
Classic Boat
AWARD
JAMES
BRERETON

ROYAL SOCIETY OF MARINE ARTISTS ANNUAL EXHIBITION

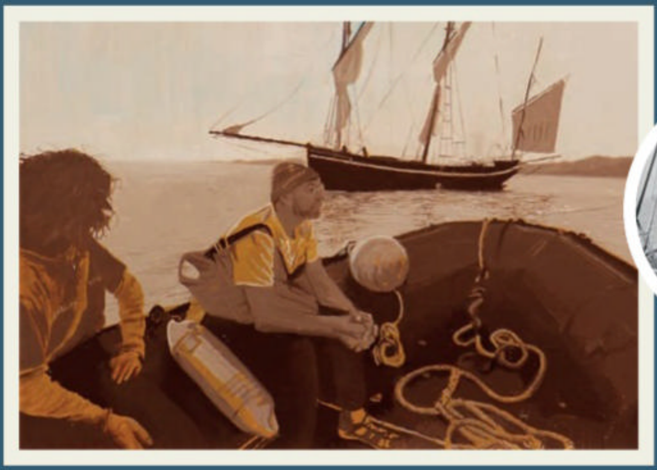
CANVAS OPINIONS

Former CB art editor, Peter Smith, chooses his favourite paintings from the 2025 RSMA show at London's Mall Galleries. See more at mallgalleries.org.uk.

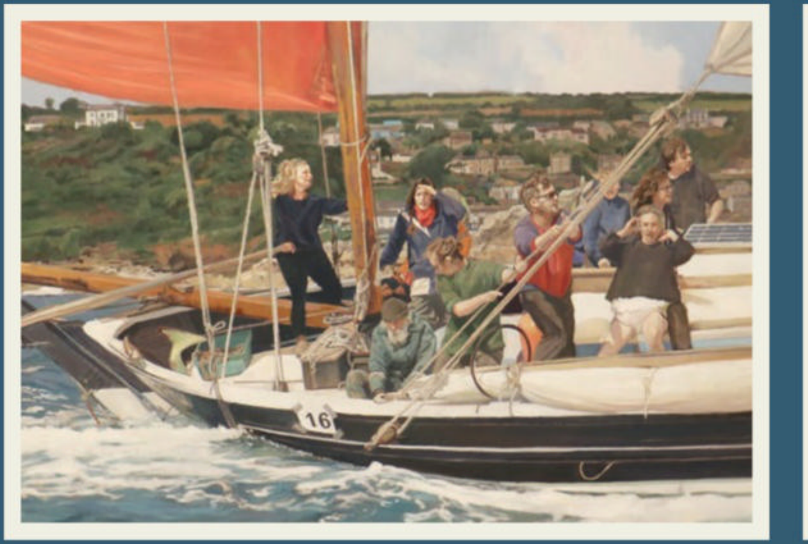
Celebrating British coastal waters and culture, the Royal Society of Marine Artist exhibition included 400 paintings and sculptures, from details of waves, to studies of boatyards, yachts and traditional work boats, and harbour views. It's an impressive exhibition demonstrating the skills gathered from the best of British marine artists.

This year's winner of the Classic Boat award was James Brereton for his oil painting 'Clear Seas, the *Alpha*'. Born 1954 in Derby and having studied at the Joseph Wright Art School, it was while living in Charminster near Bournemouth, Devon, that James developed a keen interest in marine painting much influenced by the established artists Montague Dawson and Thomas Somerscales. Now his favourite subjects are deep-water sailing ships of the 19th century. Highly Commended was Greg Ramsden ARSMA for his 'Return to the *Grayhound*'. Greg studied at Sheffield Hallam University under realist painter and Turner Prize nominee George Shaw, graduating with a BA Hons in fine art painting in 2003. This year he won the Guild of Ships Painting Award and became the artist in residence aboard the 68ft (20.7m) lugger and eco-sailing vessel *Grayhound*.

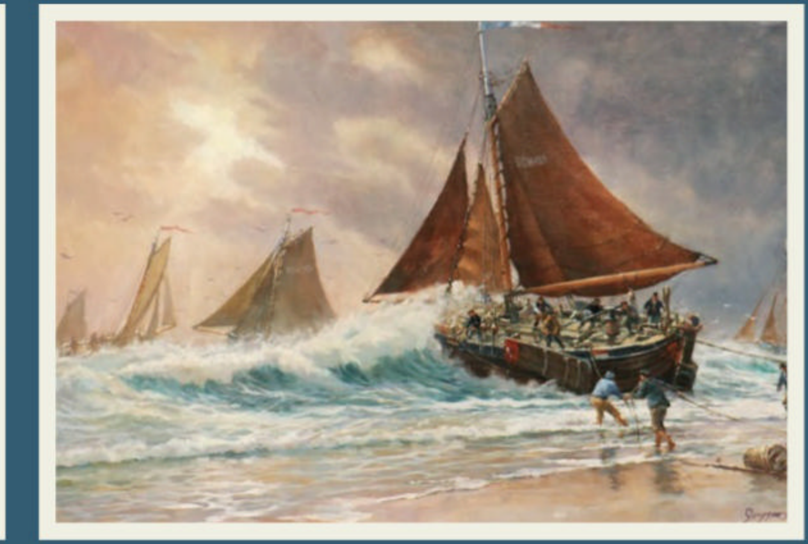
You can see all the exhibits online at the Mall Galleries: buyart.mallgalleries.org.uk/rsma-2025.



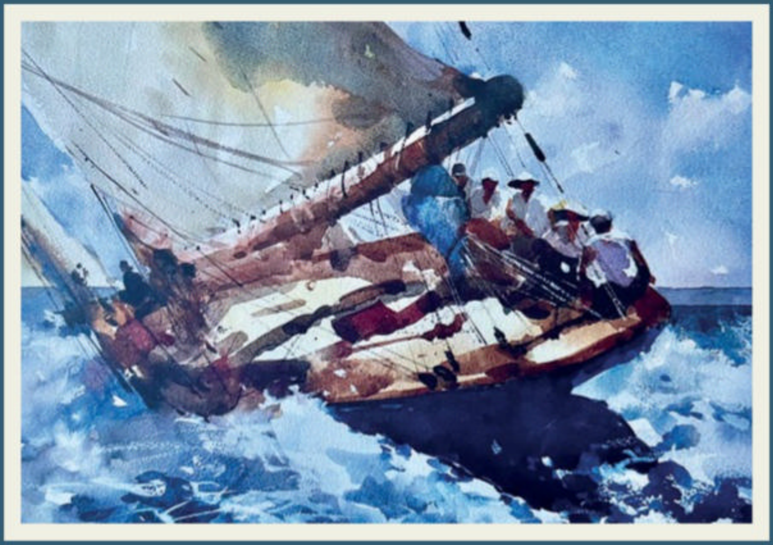
Return to the Grayhound
By Greg Ramsden ARSMA, oil on board, 30 x 41cm, £1,250



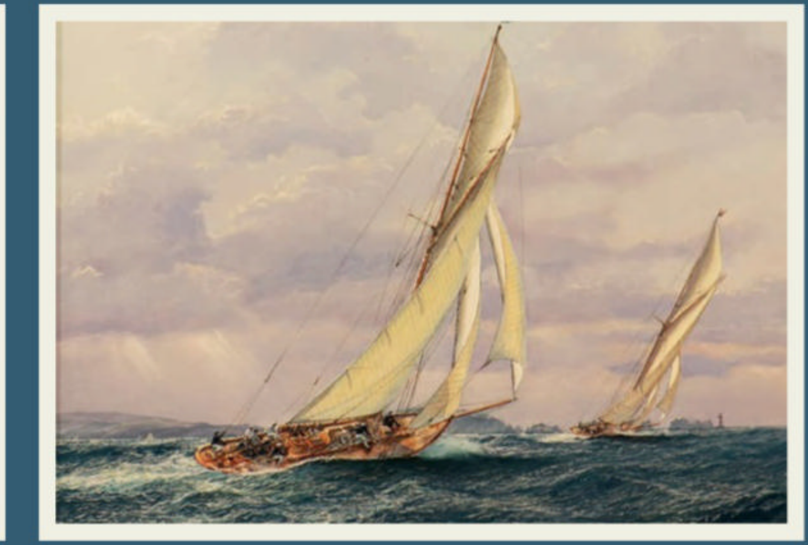
Peel passing St Clements Rock
Tim Hall RSMA, oil on canvas, 80 x 99cm, £8,500



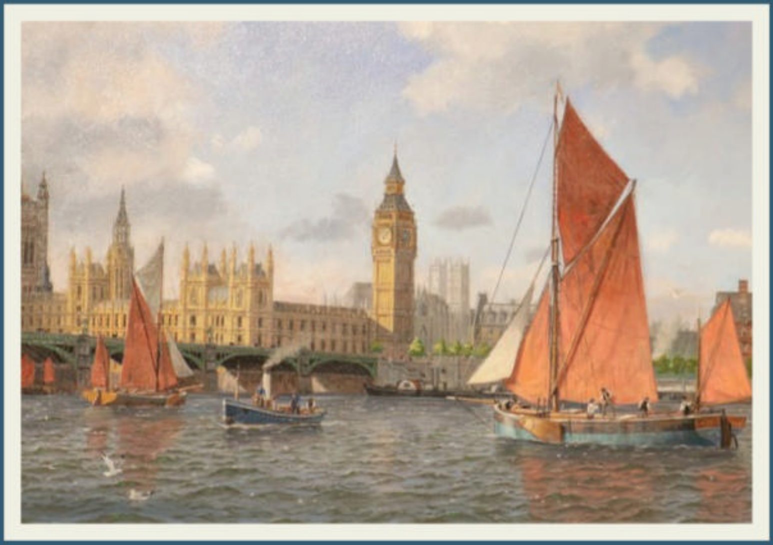
Dutch fishing pincks putting to sea in a breeze
Geoffrey Huband VPRSMA , oil, 51 x 71cm, £3,500



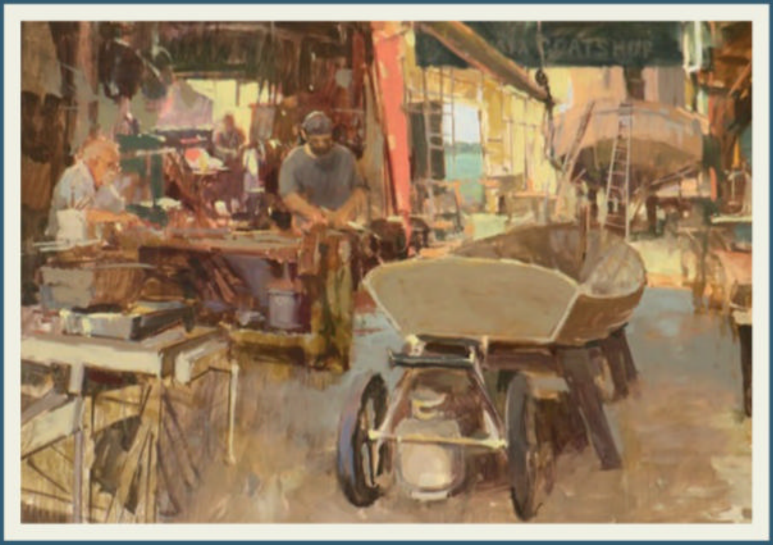
Full Sail
Sirangam Mohankumar RSMA, watercolour, 46 x 33cm, £1,400



A cracking breeze – racers in west Solent
J F Morgan RSMA, 51 x 51cm, £1,000



Edwardian London
Patrick O'Brien PASMA, oil on canvas, 61 x 91cm, £14,000



Much to do
Haidee-Jo Summer VPROI, RSMA, oil on canvas, 51 x 61cm, £2,400

ONE STRANGE & STORMY NIGHT

A Christmas tale might involve sacrifice, survival and the odd miracle, but rarely all three

WORDS DICK DURHAM

The open hearth of a sailing barge's stateroom is as good a place as any to put cheer into skipper and crew on Christmas Day, unless, that is, you are driving through an English Channel blizzard, as *Lady Daphne*. On passage, light, from Weymouth in Dorset to Fowey in Cornwall, that Christmas night, she was caught out in a north-easterly gale.

Lady Daphne was about to join an unfortunate roll-call of vessels in trouble over the festive period, as *The Daily Telegraph* reported in their 27 December, 1927 edition, with headlines that need little explanation: *Country Swept by Arctic Blizzard, A Wild Christmas*

GALE, FLOOD, FOG AND HEAVY SNOW

The news story included details of many near and actual disasters. A steamer had collided with Haisboro' Lightship off Norfolk; the Cromer lifeboat had launched to assist another steamer near the Dudgeon Lightship out in the North Sea; Fishguard lifeboat recovered three from the schooner *Kate* in the Irish Sea; the coaster *David M* had driven ashore on the north Kent coast at Birchington; the sailing barge *Fred Everard* was driven ashore at nearby Whitstable; the schooner *Pearl of Gloucester* was wrecked on the Old Head of Kinsale, Ireland with the loss of her skipper and another hand; and the St Mary's lifeboat in the Isles of Scilly had rescued seven crew from the dismasted French schooner *Gougou*.

Full details of the strangest casualty of all were yet to be revealed.

When she left Weymouth on Christmas morning the weather was fair, but by 1400, *Lady Daphne* was battling strong winds and heavy seas.

Her skipper Theodore Whitby, an unmarried man from Grays, Essex, tried to make for the shelter of Plymouth, a decision that would have required sheeting in the partly brailed up mainsail after rounding Prawle Point.

A NIGHTMARE AT CHRISTMAS

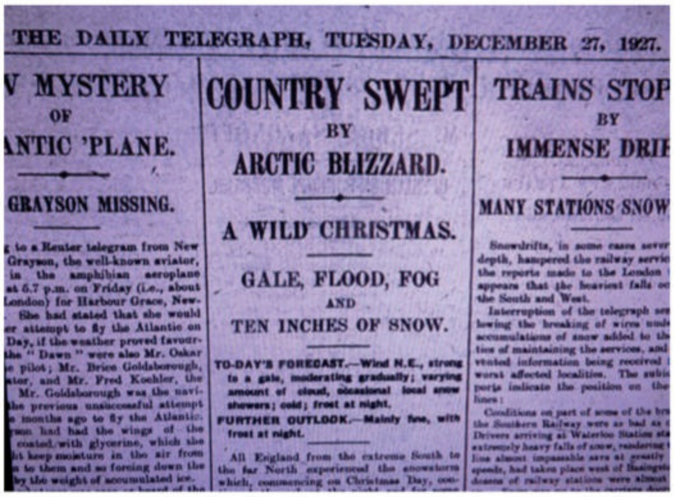
By now darkness had fallen and whatever happened next, the mainsheet block became unhooked from the traveller and, flailing like a knight's mace, is believed to have hit Whitby knocking him overboard, according to the barge's builder, Edward Packer, who spoke to the survivors. Though the crew threw out lifebelts, his body was never found.

Without the harness of the mainsheet, *Lady Daphne* then became uncontrollable. The mainsail flogged itself against the rig until it blew out; so, too, did the topsail, the mizzen and the jib.

Now, skipper-less and with just the reefed foresail remaining, the barge sailed ever westward. The mate, Kenneth Mann, also from Grays, was so cold that he had ice frozen on his face, and his hands were so numb he used his wrists to steer and tried to make for Falmouth. But, without any aft canvas, she would not come up to weather, so from 2200 until 0400 on Boxing Day, Mann, and third hand/cook, Jhansi Green, from Plymouth, set off flares and hand lights that were not spotted because of the swirling snow, until, in a brief break from the blizzard, one was eventually seen off the Lizard.

Below: The Daily Telegraph's coverage of the storm

C/O THE BRITISH LIBRARY



THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1927.

V MYSTERY
OF
ANTIC 'PLANE.

GRAYSON MISSING.

g to a Reuter telegram from New
Grayson, the well-known aviator,
in the amphibian aeroplane
at 6.7 p.m. on Friday (i.e., about
London) for Harbour Grace, New-
She had stated that she would
er attempt to fly the Atlantic on
Day, if the weather proved favour-
the "Dawn" were also Mr. Oskar
e pilot; Mr. Brice Goldsborough,
ator, and Mr. Fred Koehler, the
Mr. Goldsborough was the navi-
the previous unsuccessful attempt
months ago to fly the Atlantic.
son had had the wings of the
coated with glycerine, which she
ht keep moisture in the air from
to them and so forcing down the
by the weight of accumulated ice.

COUNTRY SWEPT
BY
ARCTIC BLIZZARD.

A WILD CHRISTMAS.

GALE, FLOOD, FOG
AND
TEN INCHES OF SNOW.

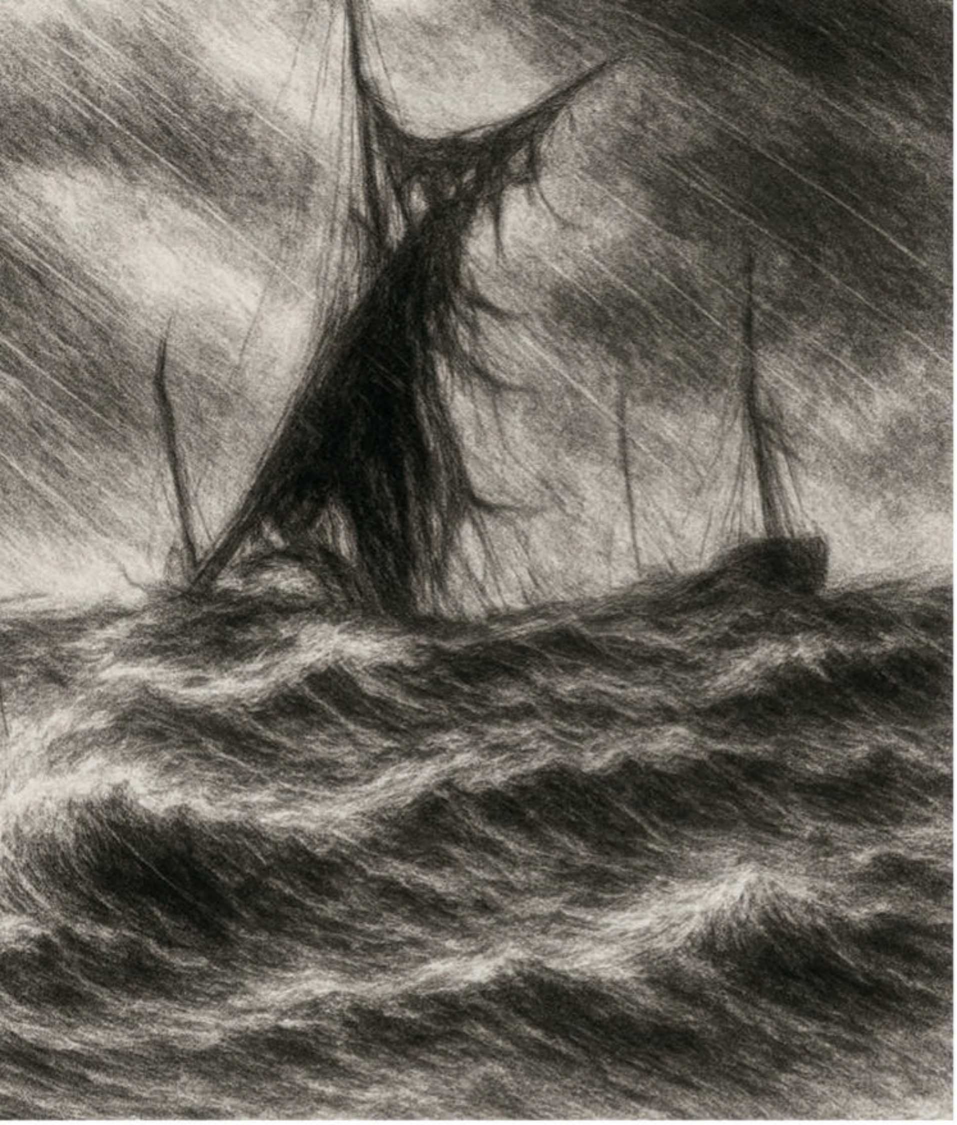
TO-DAY'S FORECAST.—Wind N.E., strong to a gale, moderating gradually; varying amount of cloud, occasional local snow showers; cold; frost at night.
FURTHER OUTLOOK.—Mainly fine, with frost at night.

All England from the extreme South to the far North experienced the snowstorm which, commencing on Christmas Day, con-

TRAINS STOP
BY
IMMENSE DRIF

MANY STATIONS SNOW

Snowdrifts, in some cases sever
depth, hampered the railway servic
the reports made to the London
appears that the heaviest falls oc
the South and West.
Interruption of the telegraph ser
lowing the breaking of wires unde
accumulations of snow added to th
ties of maintaining the services, and
vented information being received
worst affected localities. The subjo
ports indicate the position on the
lines :
Conditions on part of some of the br
the Southern Railway were as bad as
Drivers arriving at Waterloo Station sta
extremely heavy falls of snow, rendering
line almost impassable save at greatly
speeds, had taken place west of Basingst
dozens of railway stations were almost



Above: An impression of the storm, inspired by a Roger Finch drawing

LAST CHANCE STATEROOM

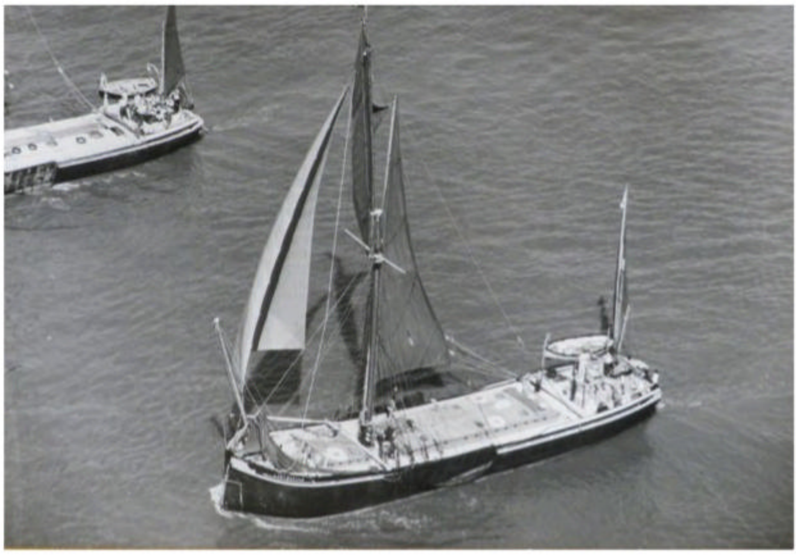
The lifeboat was launched, her crew burning hand flares to reassure those aboard *Lady Daphne*. By now they had nothing left to respond with until they remembered the paraffin burning in the lost skipper's stateroom, in the cabin lamp that still swayed over the Christmas hearth and scattered pots and pans from an interrupted festive meal.

They used an old jacket to soak up the last of the lamp's paraffin, then set it alight. The lifeboat gave chase but was unable to catch up with the *Lady Daphne* – a fast barge in any conditions – until she was 15 miles past the Lizard.

In breaking seas, the lifeboat struggled to match the pitch and roll of the barge's 85-tonne hull. One lifeboatman spotted the swinging boom of the mizzen about to knock his colleague overboard and pushed him clear.

Green jumped and landed on the aft deck of the petrol-engined lifeboat, shaped like the lifeboat collection tins still in use in Britain today. He was hauled inboard and the lifeboat ranged in again, the dipping rail of the barge clashing with the side of the lifeboat, splintering some planking, but Mann jumped and was also saved.

After her three-and-a-half-hour rescue, for which coxswain and crew later received monetary awards, the lifeboat headed back to shore. The abandoned *Lady Daphne* was left to sail on and disappear into the snow.



Below: *Lady Daphne* on the Thames in 1950

C/O MUSEUM OF LONDON

GHOSTING IN

Relaxing after a Boxing Day lunch in the smoking room of Tresco Abbey in the Isles of Scilly was second lieutenant Bernard Fergusson of the Black Watch regiment.

He was alerted to a small vessel coming in through Crow Sound with her sails in "ribbons" and called the St Mary's lifeboat, having to shout down the telephone over the gale that had now veered to the south east.

Fergusson recalled that the lifeboat had already been out the previous day to a French schooner on the Seven Stones reef and that the weather had been bad for days: there had been two wrecks in the islands that weekend and two the week before.

The Daily Telegraph report stated that the fiercest squall in the country, at 50 mph, Force 9, had been recorded in the Isles of Scilly on the day *Lady Daphne* sailed in.

Fergusson climbed the abbey watchtower and recalled in a letter to Frank Carr, who worked in the House of Lords library, what he saw: "We couldn't make out what *Lady Daphne* was doing as she stood straight on for a sand bar that runs out from St Martin's halfway to St Mary's… it was very risky to come through Crow Sound at that state of the tide and breakers were clearly visible on the bar. She stood clean over them – and we breathed again. Then instead of turning south to shelter in St Mary's Pool, she stood straight on for the Hats, which nothing has ever got over."

BEACHED IN TRESCO

Fergusson thought that a stack of gear near the wheel was an unconscious crewman lashed to the helm. The barge hit the reef, staggered, but drove over and into deeper water by which time the lifeboat was alongside and the volunteers scrambled aboard and grabbed the wheel.

"They put it hard down and she swung for a moment and we all thought they had her, but there was a crack like a gun which we heard half a mile up the shore and the jib split. She paid off again and drove the 150 yards ashore under bare poles.'

Now beached on Tresco, the only living creature on board was the skipper's pet canary perched in its cage in the warmth of the cluttered stateroom.

C/O DAVID RENOUF

SHOAL SURVIVOR

Frank Carr, then Director of the National Maritime Museum, told me that in all the years he spent sailing his pilot cutter *Cariad*, the *Lady Daphne* story was the most remarkable he'd ever heard.

So how had she survived? The western approaches is the last place on earth for a sailing barge, because the huge sprit spar that remains aloft cannot be controlled by vangs in rolling Channel breakers, unlike the gaffs of schooners and pilot cutters, which can be lowered. It was *Lady Daphne*'s shoal draught that saved her.

As Fergusson reported, there were four wrecks or strandings in the Scillies during his Christmas visit, yet the barge was back trading again in February 1928.

Dubbed 'the lucky *Lady Daphne*', she was still working down Channel years later when, in 1936, she was involved in salvaging cargo from the stranded four-masted barque *Herzogin Cecilie* which became a total loss on Bolt Head, Devon.

And as John Allendale, her third hand for a time, revealed in his book, *Sailorman Between the Wars*, the barge led "a charmed life," surviving collision with a steamer, a "flat-iron" collier near Vauxhall Bridge, in London's Lambeth Reach on the River Thames in 1944

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

On a quiet, late summer day this very year, I admired the characteristic high head of the *Lady Daphne*'s sheerline, as she lay in her new home in the sheltered hamlet of Lower Halstow dock off the River Medway in Kent.

Her new owner Geoff Gransden has added *Lady Daphne* to his charter barge fleet which also includes his beloved *Edith May*. This tiny dock is shared with the sailing barges *Tollesbury* and *Raybel*, and is becoming the Mecca of barging in Kent, rather like Maldon is for Essex.

Lady Daphne gave a good account of herself at the Southend Barge Match in July this year, but the voyage from her old berth in Penryn, Cornwall to the Thames Estuary in April was, yet again, a story of lady luck.

Skipper Geoff Gransden and his seven crew sailed her up Channel taking four days – including a day laying off Dungeness West Beach during head winds – back to the Thames. Their careful inspection of the rig found a broken shroud shackle, which could have ended in a dismasting; a broken leeboard shackle that could have lost her the board; a delaminating mizzen boom; a leaking fuel tank; and serious hull leaks, not helped by "waves breaking over the hold" and exacerbated by faulty bilge pumps.

With skill and determination they made it. She was, at last, back home. *Lady Daphne* was built in 1923 at Short Brothers in Rochester along with the *Lady Jean*, before the company made its name pioneering the legendary Sunderland flying boats.

As I looked along *Lady Daphne*'s decks and up at her rig in the late season sunshine, my eye caught the lifebelts mounted on the mizzen rigging and I thought of that dreadful night almost a century ago when they failed to save Theodore Whitby.

As a fitting tribute to the sailor, I will leave the final words to his mate Kenneth Mann, who, upon being landed by the Lizard lifeboat, told a reporter from the *Western Morning News & Mercury*: "I have been with Captain Whitby for three years. He has been more than a father to me and was one of the straightest men who ever lived."

To go sailing on *Lady Daphne* contact info@tillerandwheel.com

LADY
DAPHNE
LADY
DAPHNE
HYUNDAI

Above and below: Lady Daphne today, the lifebelts mounted in the mizzen rigging an eerie reminder of her past

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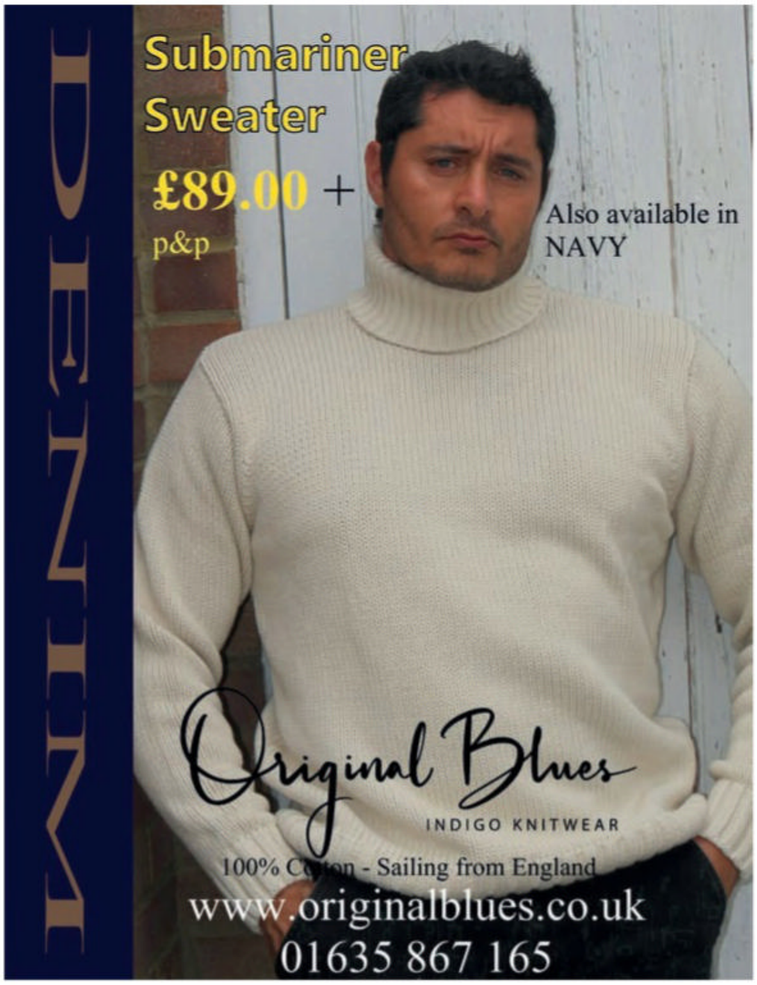
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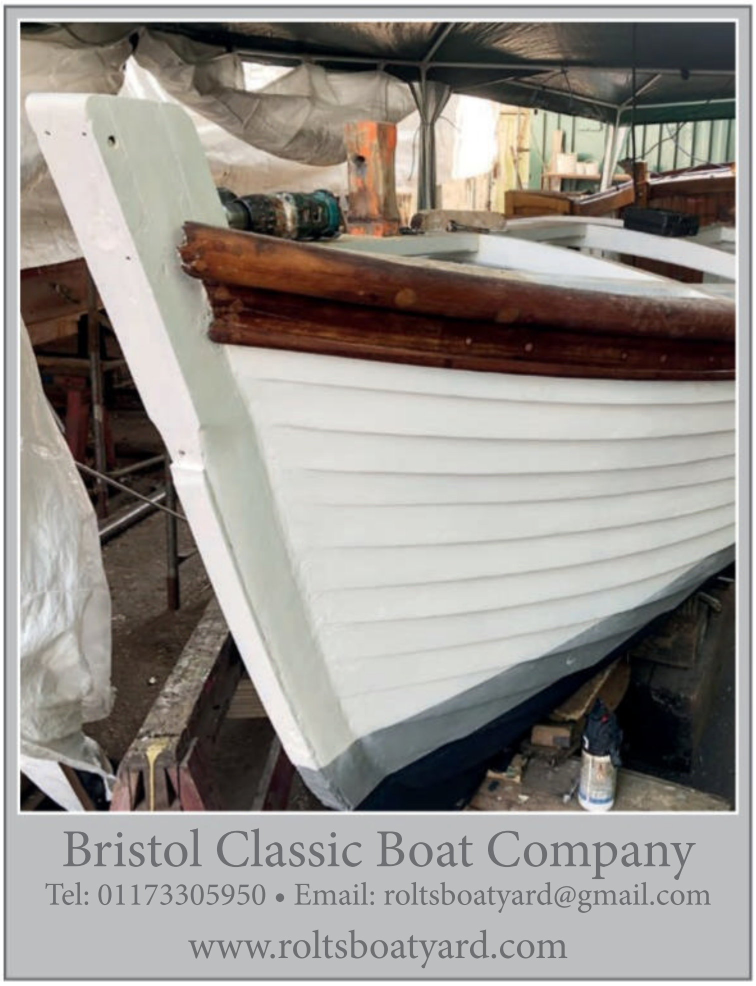
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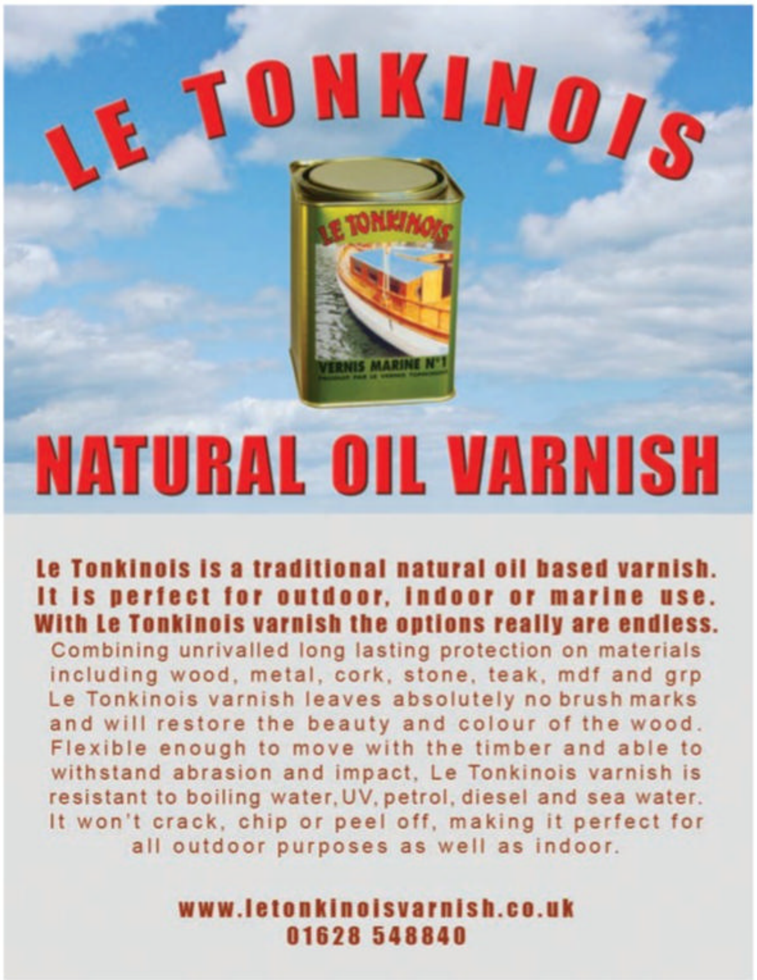
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ONE CAREFUL OWNER

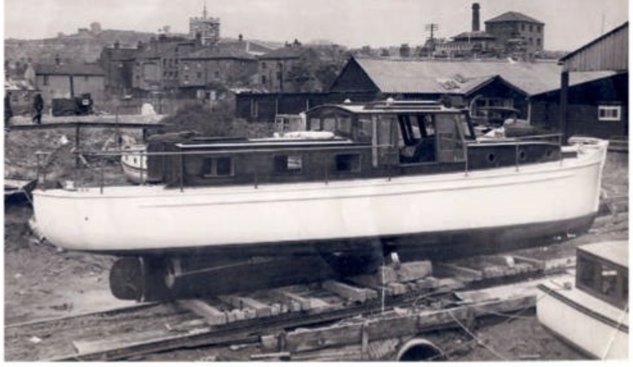
She was built the year Elvis was born, and for quarter of her life, the Dunkirk little ship *Hilfranor* has belonged to Simon Palmer, who tells us about owning such a boat

WORDS STEFFAN MEYRIC HUGHES

Above:
XXXX

Main Picture: XX

DUNKIRK



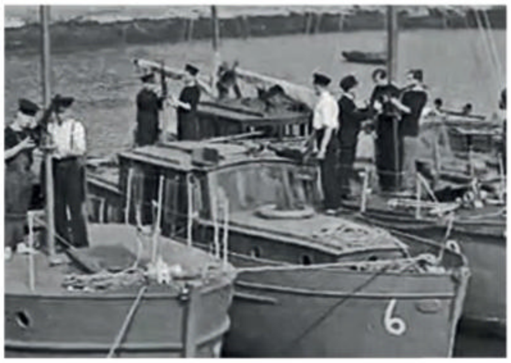
Previous spread: *Hilfranor* now... note the thin cabin and wheelhouse roofs with slight overhang

Above: Thought to depict *Hilfranor* after the war, with most of her bulwark missing

Of all the allegations levelled at this magazine, the most frequent is that of incitement. We lost count decades ago of comments like "it all started with an ad in CB." So it comes as no surprise at all that Simon Palmer, who has owned the Dunkirk little ship *Hilfranor* for 23 years, first spotted her in a 2002 issue of the magazine. "It's your fault!" he says, as we sit with his two excitable jack russels in *Hilfranor*'s saloon at her beautiful mooring in Temple Marina near Hurley on the upper Thames. Our first meeting was on the 2005 Dunkirk Return, when Simon hailed me out of the blue from his wheelhouse and invited me on board for a glass of wine, correctly describing it as "better than the rubbish you journalists drink!" Back then, the boat was quite new to him, and has been on a steady diet of improvements under his ownership since.

BROAD WATERS

This is not, like many of our stories, a tale of abandonment, salvation and resurrection. When Simon bought *Hilfranor* in 2002, she was in very good condition, with a glowing finish and a glowing survey report. Simon was working as a partner in a solicitor's firm at the time, and this was the first boat he owned, but the seed was sown in childhood, learning to sail in Canada at the age of seven. Later, Simon and family cruised the Broads every summer on an immaculate, bright-finished Broom Admiral belonging to a family friend. It clearly had an impact, as Simon remembers the smell of the water on the Broads to this day.



Below: Numbered 6 and armed with a machine gun, preparing for wartime patrol as part of the 'Mosquito Navy'

Simon's route to ownership back in 2002 was refreshingly simple. After seeing that ad in this magazine, he made "one of those pathetic pros and cons lists which you bias towards the outcome you want in the first place!" Just six weeks later, Simon took the keys. It was the look that initially snared Simon, but *Hilfranor* has other charms too: the aft deck will seat five and the wheelhouse seven, meaning socialising in both kinds of weather; the aft saloon lay out gives a spacious feel and means entertaining on the aft deck is immediately served by the galley; and the forecabin has a spacious heads and generous double berth. Above decks, the boat is easy to get around, thanks to side decks that are wide enough to walk on. These also make *Hilfranor* look narrower than her 9ft 6in of beam. "There was virtually nothing wrong with her. Coombes Boatyard had done a ground-up restoration from 1989-90, which cost £190,000 at the time." That's a cool half a million now, according to the Bank of England's inflation calculator.

GETTING HER LOOK BACK

Simon's ownership for the last quarter of a century has been effectively a partnership with Colin Messer of Classic Restorations, who have restored many Dunkirk little ships. Most changes made to the boat in that time have been in search of simplicity and originality, or aesthetic improvement. Colin persuaded Simon to get rid of the planked cabin trunk roof put on by Coombes, a roof Simon originally liked (he now admits Colin's idea is an improvement).

In 2013, Colin and team replaced the stainless steel window frames in wood ("They were ghastly! Made *Hilfranor* look like a harbour patrol vessel...") and got rid of the big radar dome. In 2018, *Hilfranor* underwent a lot of work: new engines (two Beta 60hp units, four-cylinders and no turbo –

Owning a yard-maintained Dunkirk little ship

Depreciation/appreciation
Cost of purchase, 2002: £50,000
On the market now: £150,000

Annual costs
Insurance: £1,425
Thames licence: £868
Mooring: £7,350
Total: £9,643
NB: Temple Marina is among the more expensive options

Regular maintenance

Hilfranor is an example of a completely yard-maintained boat. As Simon puts it: "If I'd looked after *Hilfranor*, she'd be worthless by now." Every other year, *Hilfranor* receives new antifoul and paint (around £2-4,000) and a varnish top-up (£2-3,000). In the 2024/2025 maintenance period, she was taken back to bare and refinished, at about £8-£10,000.

Fuel consumption

Hilfranor's two 60hp diesels will push her along at 6 knots at 1,300rpm, drinking two litres of diesel an hour each. She will cruise quite happily at around 7.5 knots at the expense of a little more diesel.

The thirty-year itch

Hilfranor received a deep restoration from 1989-90 at a cost of £190,000. The next significant restoration was in 2018 under Simon, when £155,000 was spent, with the leftover work finished in 2024 for £37,000. Much of this work was to the systems: new engines, which were £18,500 plus fitting, as well as tanks and electronics. There was a lot of aesthetic improvement like replacing the roofs on both cabins and wheelhouse, reinstating the bulwark and new, classic-looking dashboard instruments.

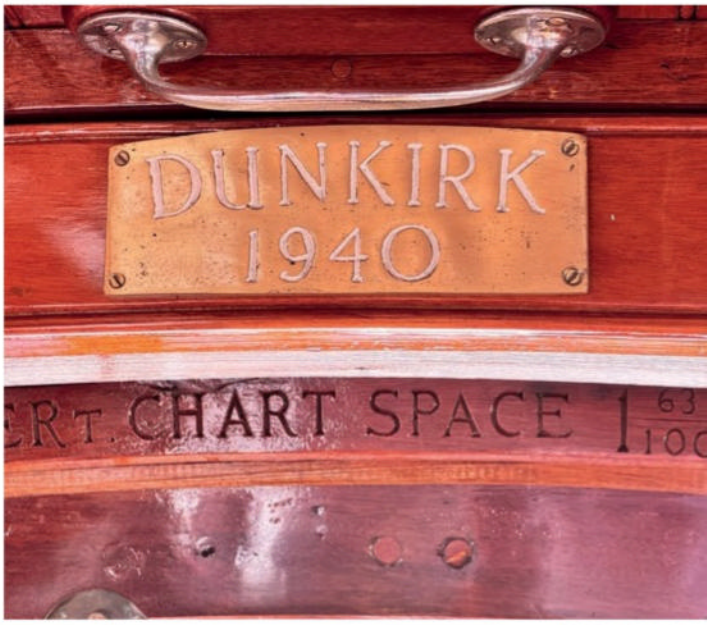
Hilfranor for sale

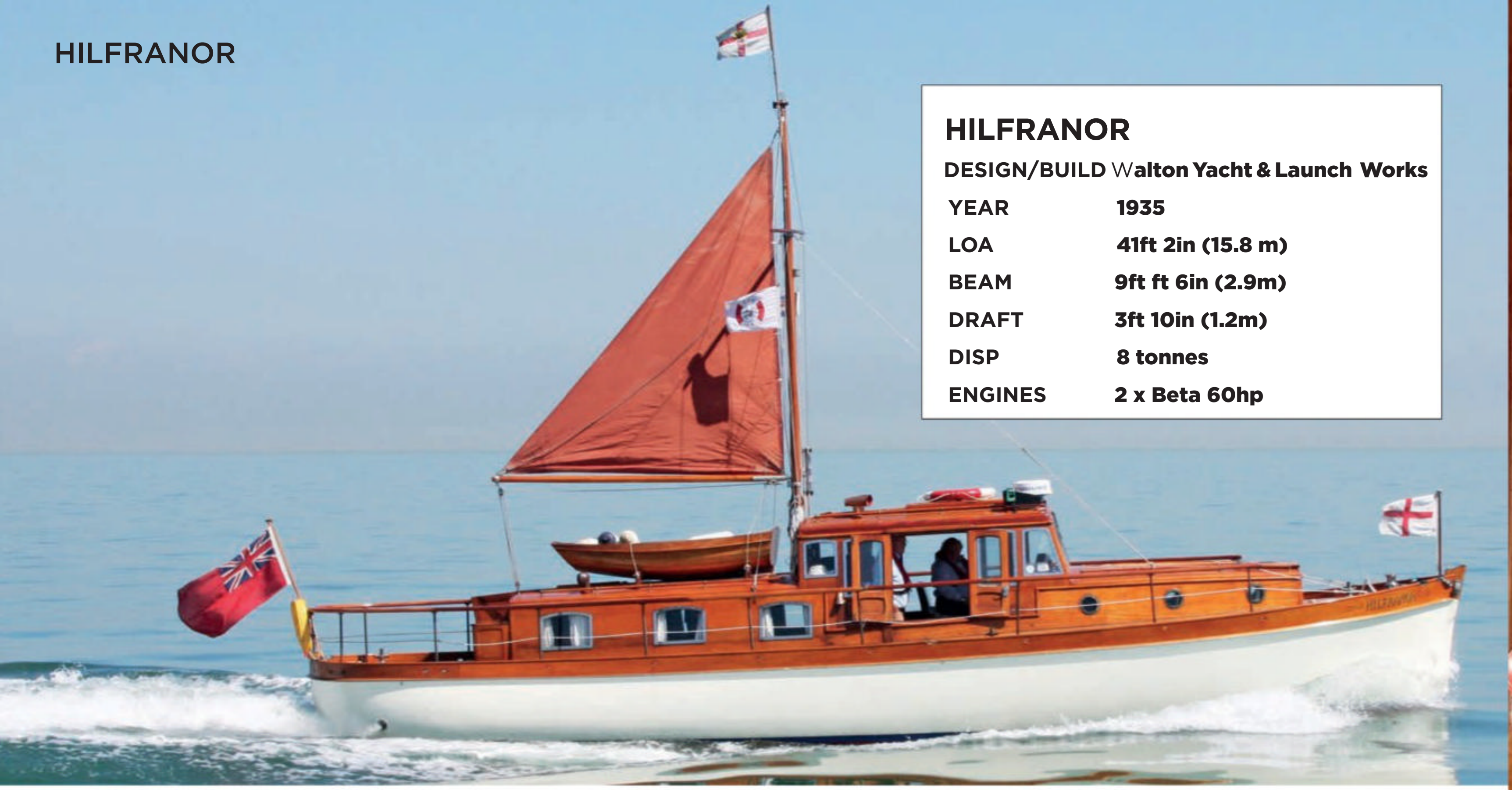
Hilfranor is for sale through Henley Sales and Charter, at £150,000. See hscboats.co.uk.

DUNKIRK 1940
MHXW

Cl/wise from top left: Owner Simon in his favourite place; Solid timber chest of drawers in forward cabin; Newly-carved tonnage inscription; Original sounding lead in holder; Saloon and galley in the rear cabin, perfect for serving the aft deck; Removable wheelhouse seats… Simon's idea, realised by Colin

MIKE GOLDWATER


DUNKIRK 1940
ERT. CHART SPACE 1 63/100



HILFRANOR

DESIGN/BUILD	**Walton Yacht & Launch Works**
YEAR	**1935**
LOA	**41ft 2in (15.8 m)**
BEAM	**9ft ft 6in (2.9m)**
DRAFT	**3ft 10in (1.2m)**
DISP	**8 tonnes**
ENGINES	**2 x Beta 60hp**

simplicity, remember), tanks and electronics. The cabin trunk sides were beginning to leak and were skinned in 10mm of mahogany. There was also time for more aesthetic improvement: the three areas of roof covering the aft cabin, forecabin and saloon were replaced in thinner timber, and given a slight overhang, to match her original look. *Hilfranor* was also given what has become her most distinctive feature; the low mahogany bulwark that runs around the boat, defining her shape (*Hilfranor* has a particularly nice stern profile when seen from above) and breaking up the freeboard, which is in period-correct off white. "The original budget for that restoration was £40,000," says Simon. "But the job list expanded."

USING HILFRANOR

Hilfranor and Simon have been stalwarts of the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships (ADLS) programme, with Simon even acting as commodore from 2018-2021. *Hilfranor* has been on all but one of the Dunkirk Returns since the first in 1965. (Only two boats – *Wanda* and *L'Orage* – have done them all.)

"When you get in with the ADLS, it creates a calendar of events: there's a visit to somewhere every other year, sometimes a European cruise. Then there are charity events like the vets' cruise and regulars like Henley Trad and St Kats festival in London." There is also, of course, the five-yearly Dunkirk Returns, the raison d'être for so many of these boats. In 2016, Simon completed a three-week Dutch and Belgian cruise: "one of the best holidays of my life. I love sleeping aboard too."

Simon has won at least two awards with *Hilfranor*, one for going aground, another for failing to win any other conventional award. It's now time to sell, as he feels. "I've had her 23 years. It's time to give someone else a chance." *Hilfranor* could appeal to someone looking for a very usable, yard-maintained motor cruiser with real history.

Above: **Simon is one of few who use the steadying sail; the concept is as sound as it ever was. (Photo taken before works to improve the coachroofs)**

Below: Hilfranor **enters Ramsgate Harbour at the end of the 2025 Dunkirk Return**

Facing page: **Wheelhouse showing new dash and instrumentation**

Lessons in ownership

- "A stitch in time saves nine" really is true. A neglected wooden boat can go from its best value in perfect condition to a nominal sum after five years of neglect. In an ideal world you should be looking for things to fix. Do not walk past a small problem because it will not get any smaller.

- Less is more. Boats can gather clutter. Consider taking something off the boat when you decide to add something.

- Keep it simple. Boats and their running gear do not like water. I was advised that my replacement engines should be as straightforward as possible, without turbos and complex electronics so that at-sea repairs would also be simple.

- The longer I owned the boat, the more cautious I became. There is danger on the water, be it a beautiful river or a benign looking sea. Don't drink while on passage, as you may need to be on your top game if things go wrong.

- Reflect on the tranquillity of a slow boat journey. As the motorway traffic screams past at 70 miles an hour breath in the calmness of travelling at walking pace.

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START
START
NAV LIGHTS
OIL PRESSURE

SAIL LIKE AN EGYPTIAN

Sailing to north Africa provided a rare chance to step off the yacht and into the world of the felucca

WORDS AND PHOTOS ROBERT WEATHERBURN

A vague shape floated up as if to etch the hazy meld of sea and sky, just as the rippling sun dancing in the dusky air cast gold-brushed steps across the mirror surface of a quiet sea. The coastline of North Africa – of Egypt – was rising from the sea.

It had been an easy-going sail from Cyprus, and *Laranda* was going eeaily, sailing herself while I sat sprawled and starkers on the foredeck, busily doing nothing. After a while I saw a group of small boats in the distance – fishing boats, I guessed – then two large ships broke into the picture and seemed to be heading towards me; probably container ships leaving harbour.

The sun breeze had filled *Laranda*'s sails and set the old boat moving with a chuckle at her bow and stern, so I reckoned it was about time I put a stop to busily doing nothing, put on some clothes, and thought about finding the entrance to Alexandria's eastern harbour.

Laranda had looked after me again: dead-on for entry into the bustling, ancient harbour of the city named after the man who really put it on the map: Alexander of Macedon, aka Alexander The Great.

SAILING INTO ALEXANDRIA

For more than 1,700 years, the Pharoes – the legendary lighthouse of old Alexandria, and one of the seven wonders of the ancient world—stood beacon at the entrance to Egypt's great port. It was built during the Ptolemaic period around 280BC, and it's estimated to have stood some 100m (330ft) tall. It was damaged by earthquakes in AD 796 and 951, again in 1303 and yet again, disastrously, in 1323. In 1480, Qaitbey, then sultan of Egypt, ordered a fortress to be built on the foundations of the Pharos, using and incorporating most of its available fallen masonry, and the fortress Citadel remains there to this day. In its heyday, the range of the Pharos' light was said to have been 29 miles!

I looked around to check that there was plenty of sea room from any other craft then went below, climbed into some shorts and made a cup of coffee. Only a few minutes in all, but when I stepped back up into the cockpit there was a fleet of small fishing craft around, and the two huge, slab-sided container ships were making course to pass me well to starboard, maybe heading for Greece, the Adriatic coast of Italy or the Med's western basin, passing through the Sicilian channel and then on to who knows where. Those great leviathans are the cargo carriers of the world-wide economy, and small yachts in their proximity can be a nightmare for their skippers. A tiny spot on their radar? Yes, with luck, maybe – but an old wooden boat? Even with a radar reflector? Never assume you've been seen… make sure you are.

The Mediterranean is a very busy sea, and if you were unlucky enough to be in a collision or near miss, the crew of a large ship may have been totally unaware of your presence or of any incident.

By now, 'Alex' was on the bow, and I was no stranger to

Above left: *Laranda* with topsail

Above: Into the islands below Aswan Dam

the city. I have always been fascinated by ancient Egyptian culture, and had previously stayed in Cairo, Luxor, Aswan and Alexandria.

SAIL PLAN

While cruising in the Med, especially with an old wooden boat, one makes many friends and acquaintances, and while in Naxos, Sicily, we were befriended by the crew of a Tunisian fishing boat. Ashraf, the captain of the boat – whom I assumed to be Tunisian but who was in fact Egyptian – was interested in *Laranda*'s gaff rig, and I was equally curious about the lateen rig so favoured by the Arabs, and which had very likely been in use for over 2,000 years throughout the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and on the Nile. The small lateen-rigged sailing craft on the Nile are known as feluccas, and they've remained largely unchanged through the ages, apart from now sporting the ubiquitous outboard motor.

Ashraf had a lateen-rigged dhow in Tunisia, and his brother had a fishing boat in Alex and a felucca on the Nile at Aswan. As Ashraf was then living in Alex, and we'd stayed in touch over a few years, he'd suggested that I sail *Laranda* down from Cyprus, before taking her back to Malta for the winter, and I could spend as much time as I liked sailing with his brother on the Nile.

I'd called Ashraf before leaving Cyprus, and told him that, given that the good weather held, and with the wind light from the northwest, I reckoned *Laranda* and I would make Alexandria sometime the following Tuesday. He'd just laughed and said: "Don't worry my friend. I have many friends around the harbour and I'll know when you are a couple of miles out. Head for the eastern harbour and I'll find you."

I guess I was about half a mile out when I thought it was about time to drop the sails and motor in when I saw a motorboat heading straight for me. I watched as her skipper altered course to turn and take a position parallel with me, and then I saw who it was: Ashraf. "Hello Rob," he shouted, "get the sails down and follow me. My brother's here with me, so I'll come alongside and he can jump and over and give you a hand. No need to hang about – it's great so see you." Saeid jumped aboard as the two boats almost – but not quite – rubbed shoulders.

"Easy peasy" Saeid laughed, and grabbed my arm and shook my hand. (Easy-peasy? Where the hell did he get that from?) "Now we just follow big brother. He's told me all about you and this boat." And so we motored into Alexandria's eastern harbour and tied up alongside Saeid's fishing boat.

Saeid was right about easy peasy; the customs and immigration barely noted us.

EGYPT'S SAILING ICON

The use of lateen sails on the feluccas of the Nile has made them the iconic sailing vessels of Egypt, just as the lateen rig is emblamatic of the waters of the old Middle East. Modern research credits the development of the lateen rig to the Romans in the first century AD – lateen being roughly the French pronunciation for Latin – and the rig was adopted and adapted by mariners in the Mediterranean and northwest Indian Ocean, where it remains a practical favoured rig in everyday use. On the feluccas on the Nile, the single lateen sail, with its long yard – a

Above right: Saeid climbing the rig to manage the sail

soaring spar scything skywards – is aesthetically stunning. In that shape is the suggestion of a new moon, so often associated in Islamic culture, and the scimitar or 'saif', the short sword used by Arab horsemen against the Christian crusading armies.

During the maritime age of discovery, from the early 15th until roughly the end of the 17th century, the Portuguese led the way by using the lateen rig on their state-of-the art caravels, and the square and spritsail rigs gave way to the new technology; to the rig that allowed them to sail to windward. And that, of course, is what it was all about: being able to tack and sail to windward.

But that lateen curve is something that takes its shape only when the wind plays with the canvas held by the two spars – the yard and the boom – and upon the strength of the wind and the set of the sail. The sail only comes alive with the kiss and touch of the wind… the breeze. Laid on the ground, a lateen sail is dead flat, and requires no special sail-maker's cutting or stitching to create the needed camber that will carry the wind around its leeward face to give 'lift'—the same principal with the 'lift' of an aircraft's wing— with the air passing over the top of the wing — and with a sail, drawing, almost sucking the vessel to windward.

Today the use of the lateen rig is widespread, for pleasure and commerce, and I've seen it in Europe in Spain and Portugal, in the Greek islands and the Adriatic; in the Sea of Marmara, the Black Sea, Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. But it is the feluccas on the Nile that seem to conjure and hold its binding magic as part of everyday life.

FELUCCA SAILING

Today, modern Aswan stands near to the first of the six cataracts of the Nile, just north of the Aswan Low Dam, and now the islets, islands and rocky outcrops of the cataract are an ideal cruising ground for feluccas taking tourists out for day trips around its waters, and to visit Elaphantine, an island that was the site of the original settlement in the area, and that is now part of the city of Aswan.

At weekends, families and groups of people from Aswan hire or use their own boats to go to the islands of 'the cataract that was' and take it easy with a lazy picnic in whatever shade they can find. I've always found the people of Aswan very friendly, and when sailing in and among the islands, they often wave and ask you to come over and break bread with them.

Our plan for sailing on the Nile was for me to stay with Saeed's family in Aswan, and he'd take me out to get me used to handling the boat in the open water of the river—before tackling the maze of channels around the islands.

First time out, Saeid shinned up the mast and then the yard barefooted, as easily as walking up it, and loosed the sail as he came down. Then he showed me the 'ropes of the ropes' before letting go from the berth, shoving the boat out with an oar, and almost immediately catching the current that allowed us to turn and head downstream... and we were away. Then it was just a matter of setting the sail as you would with any lug, sliding lug, or gaff sail. The spread of the canvas between the two spars – yard and boom – gave a natural camber to the flat-cut sail, and we sailed out on port tack,

heading towards the west bank. I was surprised how lively and responsive the boat was and I soon got the hang of it. No winches here: everything was done easily by hand, and by simply coming up into the wind a little if we needed to harden up on the mainsheet and come closer to the wind. Some years before, I'd done away with all winches on *Laranda*, and she handled the same way, although she was nowhere near as lively as the felucca that day.

The beauty of the one triangular sail is that it takes the place of two separate sails – jib and main – and with the yard lowered and adjusted athwartships, the sail can be used in the same way as a square sail for running with the wind. No wonder the rig was state of the art two millennia ago, and with relatively small craft – fishing boats, for instance – the whole thing could be managed by one man.

Above: Feluccas moored at Aswan

Right: Sailing in the narrow channels between islands

Below: Laranda at anchor, showing bowsprit and gaff spars

LEAVING EGYPT

When I saw *Laranda* again, in the fishing harbour of Alexandria, I felt as if she was smiling at me and I was suddenly anxious to be aboard her again. Two of my friends had come to see 'us' off (yes, I had a special relationship with *Laranda*) but I had decided to leave early the following morning, and so my friends stayed aboard for the night for a great evening farewell. Next morning, they rowed ashore around 0400, and *Laranda* and I got busy to leave. The eastern sky was brightening as I dropped the mooring to motor out of the harbour, and then, as I was raising sail, a blood-gold arc of blazing light pushed up and over the horizon. Suddenly alive and just as soon, I felt the first touch of the sun wind, the breath of Ra. *Laranda* stirred herself with a gurgle from her bow wave. She was keen to go. Her sails filled and I sat back in the cockpit, feeling the life in her tiller. I was sad to leave: it felt as if Egypt was now in my blood. I watched astern as the long, low line of her body slipped away beneath the sea but I had friends for life and simply looked forward to my next visit.

LARANDA

DESIGN AND BUILD	**Hillyard, 1934**
TYPE	**Cutlass Class (one of three)**
LOD	**30ft (9.1m)**
LWL	**28ft 6in (8.7m)**
DISPLACEMENT	**8 Tons**

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Above: Will Stirling (far left) and crew warm below decks on the 43ft gaff cutter *Integrity*, built by Will in 2012, and currently sailing in northern climes

Above right: Original Taylors stove aboard the recently restored 39ft bermudan cutter *Peregrine*, designed by OM Watts and built by Fife in 1936

COSY CABIN

From flickering oil lamps to hard spirits, we find 10 ways to make your cabin warmer this winter

WORDS STEFFAN MEYRIC HUGHES **PHOTOS** CB ARCHIVES

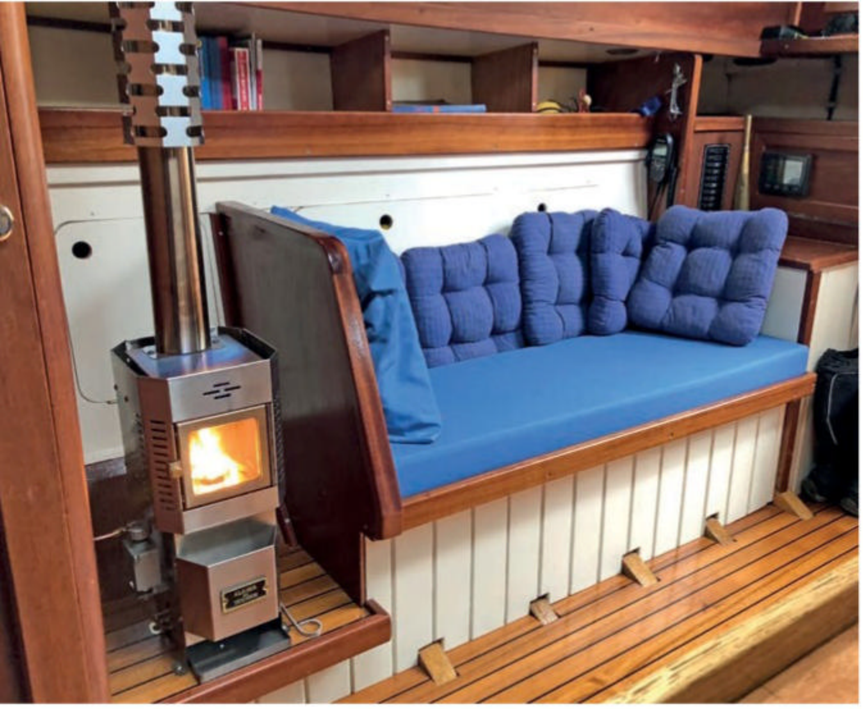
Show a landlubber a yacht and he'll only want to know two things: what it costs, and how many 'beds' it has. Perhaps because of this, many of those in the know avoid talking about the interior, preferring instead to focus on hull form and rig, or engines. This affectation has sometimes reached comical heights: one boatbuilder told me a few years ago that they "only do interiors so the wives buy in on the sale", as though a cruising yachtsman, left to his own devices, would live off cold food with just a bucket for amenities and a sleeping bag for warmth.

Yet, who wasn't, as a child perhaps, captivated by the moment the Walker kids discover the cabin of the 8-Ton Hillyard *Goblin* in *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*? Or the scene where the world-weary man about town, Carruthers, first steps aboard his friend Arthur Davies's yacht *Dulcibella* in *The Riddle of the Sands*? As well as the "No. 3 Rippingille" stove boiling a kettle for tea, there is "a bookshelf crammed to overflowing with volumes of all sizes, many upside down and some coverless. Below this were a pipe rack, an aneroid [barometer] and a clock with a hearty tick. All the woodwork was painted white, and to a less jaundiced eye than mine, the interior might have had an enticing look of snugness. Some Kodak prints were nailed roughly on the after bulkhead, and just over the doorway was the photograph of a young girl."

The truth is that the interior of a yacht is probably the most intense form of comfortable privacy there is, a home away from home, and this is never truer than in the colder months, for those who continue to be out on the water, or just to enjoy being on the boat at its mooring. As Arthur Davies knew, a whistling stove and a framed photo can work wonders; and here are a few other ideas.

SOLID FUEL BURNER

There are many variants, the most popular on classic yachts being the small Faversham stove offered by Colin Frake, which will burn smokeless fuel or ordinary coal. It is popular on yachts and narrowboats, easily kicking out enough heat, and winning friends for its simplicity, as well as the ability to fuel such a stove on just about anything anywhere. Stoves like this have other advantages: silent operation and dry heat. They are very effective at keeping condensation and dampness at bay below decks, unlike some other forms of heat (gas, for instance). As far as charm and cosiness factor goes, a solid fuel burner is timeless and unsurpassed. Do take great care with the installation of a stove like this: they have been known to set fire to bulkheads they are positioned near, and the use of heat retardant tiles behind such a stove is highly recommended. And please, mount a carbon monoxide alarm somewhere high up (CO1 rises). Tales of carbon monoxide poisoning aboard boats are surprisingly common and can be life-changing or fatal. The solution is very cheap and unobtrusive.



DIESEL HEATER

Those not sold on the benefits of a solid fuel stove will probably be considering a diesel heater. The usual modern arrangement is a compact Eberspacher or Webasto diesel heater in a cockpit locker, blowing warm air into the cabin by use of a fan. These are highly efficient and reliable units (the jury is still out on the much cheaper, Chinese-made versions), but for a cosy classic yacht interior, it's worth considering a simpler 'drip diesel' heater. These days, the classic Taylor is no longer in build, so Refleks and Dickinson carry the mantle, along with a few refurbished Taylors in good condition knocking around, with new spare parts from Classic Marine. These usually come in stainless steel and are diesel heater is delightfully simple: the combustion chamber is heated for a moment with meths, then an adjustable valve lets two drips of diesel, gravity fed from a small header tank, into the hot chamber every second, where it is burned, the waste gases escaping through a chimney. The distinctive metal front can be opened, and the flame seen through a small, glass 'porthole'. Those who have them tend to swear by them for their simplicity. The same safety caveats around solid fuel burners (CO1) apply here too.

STOVE

There is nothing to match a venerable pressure paraffin stove like a Taylors or Shipmate for a classic yacht. The starting procedure... setting the galley on fire then waiting for an explosion... is always a thrill. Once this excitement is over, the stove burns with a steady hiss and blue flame, a sight and sound that is a connection back to generations of those who went to sea in small yachts. Like the diesel heater, it is no longer in production, but refurbished examples are available (at a price!). Thankfully, the modern ovens and stoves available now have tended towards plain stainless steel and timeless design, so it's easy to find something that looks reasonable.

Above left: A Dickinsons Alaska drip diesel heater aboard an old wooden classic, providing warmth, reliability and a visible fire

Above right: Open frame bays on the newly restored, 72ft S&S yacht *Baruna* launched in 1938

Below left: Nothing beats the warm light of an oil lamp

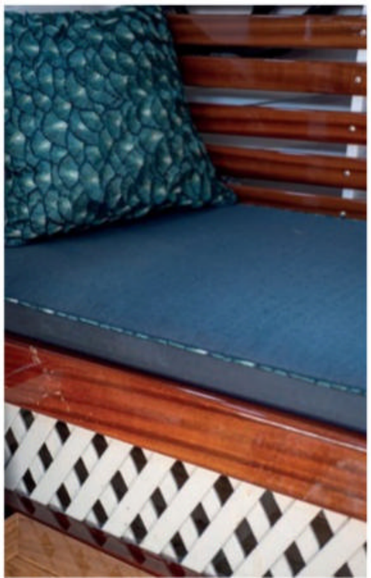
Below right: Nicely spaced ceiling planks on the fast 1938 motor cruiser *Makaira*

OIL LAMPS

Oil lamps have long been a staple for a really snug yacht cabin. They come in a hundred variants, from the cheap and cheerful Dietz hurricane lamp in black-painted or tinned steel, to beautiful, curvaceous works of art in bronze and brass, cast by hand by the likes of Dave and Co of London, who haven't changed all that much since they outfitted yachts like the *Dulcibella*. They come ready for wall or ceiling mounting, and all work in the same principle, with a reservoir of lamp oil soaking a long wick like a wide shoelace, the tip of which protrudes inside a protective glass surround. Some wall-mounted models are gimballed. As with the stove, look where you place these for heat build up above the light. Some have heat shields for this purpose.

CEILING

Yacht ceilings (and by 'ceilings' of course, I mean walls, and by 'sole', I mean floor – use it or lose it!) are a bit of a topic on wooden yachts. It's all about air flow; the more of it the better, when it comes to suppressing damp and subsequent rot. The boat would ask for no interior covering at all – just planks and the internal ribs and frames. This is frequently the case and can work well, those in the cabin enjoying an intimacy with the structure by always seeing its bones. There are, however, a few places where it might be more homely, and comfortable, to have some sort of a ceiling, and this applies the most when sleeping, when you don't want to bang your knee into a heavy, sawn frame. The plank ceiling popular in sleeping areas is an easy DIY fix: it's just thin strips of timber (red cedar would be a nice choice) nailed, glued or screwed to the frames, as in this photo. Leave plenty of space between the gaps for air circulation.



BEDDING

The old blue, plastic-covered foam mattresses that grace many a forepeak are a great place for dumping spare rope and sailbags, and they're fine to sleep on too, but for a truly snug interior, you might want something softer than that. There are a number of outfitters who will do new mattresses, toppers and bedding to size, and to fit those awkward shapes like U-bend settees in the saloon and those ubiquitous forepeak bunks. The mattresses tend to the expensive side, but the fitted sheets, duvets and duvet covers are more affordable for a cheaper 'refresh' of a cabin.

BOOKS

A bookshelf or two gives a soft look to any interior. Books are also very practical: book pages can make accurate feeler gauges if necessary - just count how many pages there are in a centimetre and work from there. A typical paperback book page is about a 1/30mm. Books are also good insulation and can be burned if necessary, if you have a solid wood stove. You might even want to read them… in your bunk, by the light of an oil lamp!

ART

I once saw a superyacht with the description "artwork by Turner." We are not suggesting either that you go out and buy Turners, or that you keep them in the atmosphere of a cabin on a yacht. The best kind of art in any yacht cabin is a photo or painting or drawing of the yacht itself, preferably out in foul conditions, so you can shiver in your slippers and thank God you're not there, while being grateful that if you are, your boat will get you through it.

Facing page: Rugs on the sole of S&S sport fisher *Grey Fox* and (below) the Fife 15-M yacht *Mariska*
Above left: Cosy bunks on Mylne's *Atlantide*
Above right: Books…
Below: Classic 'boat in bad conditions' photo; Yellow cedar forepeak

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SPIRITS

Doctors and others who enjoy speaking of hypothermia like to remind us that alcohol does NOT warm you up, rather provides an illusion of warmth. As the illusion is both convincing and pleasing, we recommended that at least one bottle of spirits be carried on board. It takes up less space than wine or beer and is just the thing on a cold night. In CB222, we carried out a rum test in uncontrolled conditions, and Cockspur won the popular vote. (Not a spirit, but in CB251, we tasted every champagne in existence, on the flimsy context that you might need it on launch day. The verdict was that they're all the same apart from Krug, which was "different, and not in a good way.") Salcombe or Dartmouth Gin sound right for a boat, but for winter months, rum, whisky or brandy is probably the thing. It's tempting to say that if Grant's whisky was good enough for Robin Knox-Johnston on his round-the-world sail aboard *Suhaili*, then it's good enough for anyone – but there are better whiskies, like the heavy, peaty Talisker, distilled on Skye, but similar in style to an Islay. Some heavy glasses with a low centre of gravity are ideal for this sort of carry-on.

BLANKETS, RUGS AND CUSHIONS

The quickest way to warm any space is to fill it with blankets (call them 'throws' if fancy permits). Old ones are best – look in charity shops for the genuine woollen article for next to nothing. Some also like a rug on the cabin sole, which is a great look provided it's not going to slip and isn't too near the galley, where it will get stained by the inevitable spills.

Tom Cunliffe

Sixth century pilot

Guided to safety by a man in a curragh

Being guided into a remote island anchorage in half a gale on the west coast of Ireland by a lone man in a canvas-skinned curragh is a rare experience - especially when the haven appears to promise little in the way of shelter, yet serves up the sort of tranquillity normally only found behind a secure harbour wall.

It was the mid 1990s and I was researching my books on pilotage in the days of sail and oar. On the hunt for suitable history while always looking out for adventure, my crew and I cruised up towards Fenit in *Westernman*, our 40ft (12.2m) gaff cutter. I'd been corresponding with a local pilot, Bob Goodwin, who had invited us to his old family home on the off-lying Magharee islands from where they had guided ships into Fenit and the West for generations.

Approaching the Magharees in a serious onshore wind, I could see no hope of a secure berth, but Bob appeared as if from nowhere, singlehanded in his curragh, rising and falling buoyantly in the 20ft (6m) swell. He beckoned us to follow him. No better pilot existed on the planet, so we did, and the local knowledge of a true professional proved a pearl without price. He led us to a tiny pool that somehow was mill-pond flat despite being surrounded by all the mayhem of a strong wind on the lee side of the Atlantic. As the mighty swells thundered past on either side there was a surreal feeling about the place where we lay, totally safe.

We boarded the curragh and went ashore for Bob to brew us tea in the simple house that had lain undisturbed but well maintained since his family moved ashore thirty years earlier. The island of Illauntannig is well under half a mile long from north to south, so it didn't take more than a few minutes to stroll to where the sea was eroding a low cliff. There, poking out boldly, stood the bones of anchorite monks of the Celtic church who had lived out their time here in prayer and contemplation three hundred years before the first Viking longships swept down from the north with their cargo of terror and destruction. The remains of the beehive huts of the hermits have survived, together with a small graveyard, battered by seas and hurricane force winds. Spray misted the air as the ocean gale blew on.

From the 19th century, pilots have been working Tralee Bay and the approaches to Fenit, the port for Tralee itself. An Fhianait (Fenit) means 'The Wild Place', and the name is well chosen. Historically, the business was potentially lucrative, at least by the standards of the area, and pilots were men of high prestige, but shipping was far from dense, so competition ran hot for what there was.

At the height of the potato famines that ripped through the western population in the mid nineteenth century, ships like the famous Jeanie Johnston sailed from Fenit and nearby Blennerville with desperate families emigrating to the USA.

Pilots were joining ships from four-man canvas curraghs until the 1960s and Bob Goodwin remembered going out with his father to board incoming vessels in the traditional way. When he made his own first trip as pilot he took a lift out to the ship with a cousin and his son who were off to sea in their curragh to tend lobster pots. The pilotage fee was £7 10s (£7.50) inwards. Goodwin paid his crew £2 each, leaving £3 10s for him.

In his own words, 'I was as happy as if I had won the lotto!'

My interest in the curraghs of the west was re-ignited recently by the arrival on my doormat of John Barry's book *Joyful Pilgrimage - The Voyage of the Iona Curragh*. This slim volume ties the canvas boats of Ireland irrevocably to the 6th-century Irish monks who fanned the dying flame of Christianity across Europe in the vacuum left by the collapse of the Roman Empire. From the beehive fastnesses in the far west they put to sea in curraghs generally somewhat larger than Bob Goodwin's, but otherwise indistinguishable.

In 563, Saint Columba sailed north from the deep inlet of Derry with a crew of twelve devout men bound for the Hebrides and Iona. He brought the boat ashore on the white sand of Martyrs' Bay, built a monastery on the site that is a place of pilgrimage to this day, and set about his work as 'a wanderer for Christ'. The year of his voyage, so far back in the mists of dark-age history, is known because it was written up by one Saint Adamnan, eighth abbot of Iona, right down to the names of Columba's twelve shipmates. We don't know a lot about this Adamnan other than that his monks kicked him out for veering towards the Pope, but he did a sound job for historians.

The Iona voyage was re-enacted 1400 years later by a group of stalwarts led by Canon John Barry and skippered by the inimitable Wallace Clark. Their curragh was built just as Saint Columba's would have been except for a tarred calico skin to replace the greased hides favoured by the anchorites. At 30ft (9.1m), she was a serious seagoing proposition despite a beam of only 5ft 9in (1.7m).

It's a grand thing that Jonathan Barry, the canon's son, has seen fit to publish his father's book again. Studying it brings rich rewards on a number of levels. The main text by Barry is the story of the dream brought to improbable reality by the grace of God, laced with Irish humour. The postscript by that great seaman Wallace Clark gives it to us straight. The Iona Curragh, he tells us, was a long way from perfect, but handled with skill, grit and a healthy trust in the Almighty, she made it.

There is much in this that she can teach us all.

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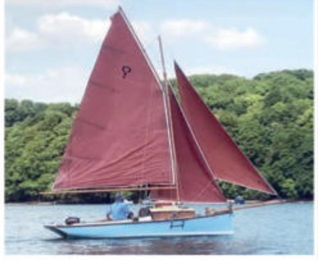


Secret 20 Gaff cutter designed by Derek Ellard, Australia. Built 2016, LOA 20' (6m) Beam 7' (2.1m) Draught2'3" (0.68m) Disp 650 kg. Construction: Marine Ply and epoxy, Australian red wood trim. Fin keel with 160 kg ballast and 40 kg internal ballast. Engine: 3.5hp 4 stroke OB new 2025, sited in well. Sails: Gaff mainsail, staysail, jib, and strong winds staysail. Fast weekend cruiser with 2 berth cabin. Yard/launching trailer on single axle road trailer with manual winch. Dry berthed on the Dart, wintered indoors. Sailed, singlehanded, on South Coast and the Clyde. **£8500**

Contact **07377939322** or **bill.thomson851@gmail.com**

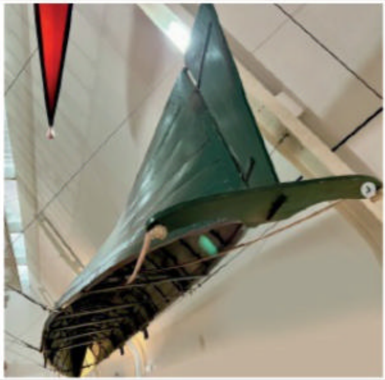
ROYAL OAK

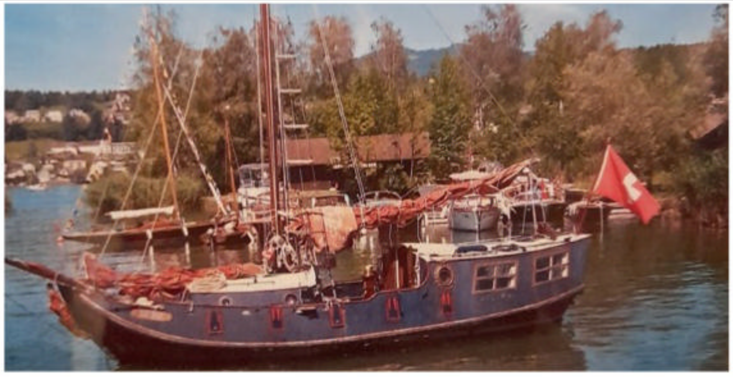
Royal oak is a four-oared Irish gig dating from the early 1800s, made of oak with elm ribs, a fast sea-going boat designed for racing. It has thole pins and bar foot stretchers. As far as is known it is the oldest racing boat in Britain. It was built for the Bailie family (in 1812?) whose Ringdufferin estate is on Strangford Lough in County Down, Ireland. It is clinker built with square rivets, main timbers being of oak and the seven planks of pitched oak over ribs of elm. The design was probably influential, through the school and student activities of William de Ros, the son of a nearby house. He attended Westminster and later Oxford, where he introduced a racing four in 1816. Royal Oak was crewed by members of the family and their guests as well as the fishing community from nearby Ardmillan, including an all-women crew, and won many races.

The boat was exhibited at the inaugural Brest Maritime festival in 1992, was rowed on the Thames in the Great River Race later that year and has been shown in the River and Rowing Museum in Henley since 1998.

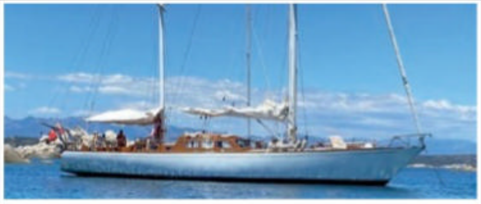
Offers in the region of £20,000

Contact: **Elizabeth via leza59@hotmail.co.uk** or **07929940725**



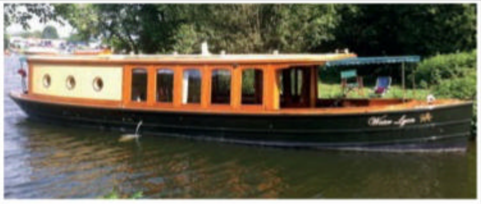


GRACE DARLING
Dutch staatenyacht,
1972, steel,
29 foot.
3YM30 Yanmar,
lying Horning.
£35,000
Contact: **Ulrich Ging**
01 502 512 907



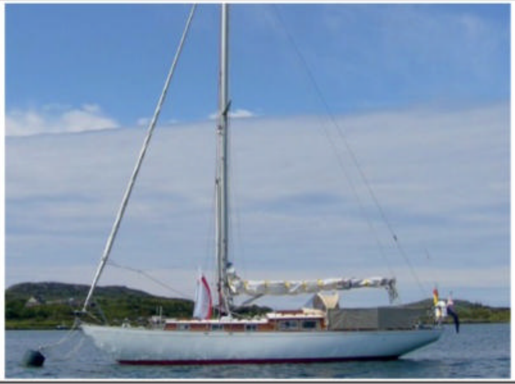
OLIRIA

Bermudian ketch built by the Sangermani yard in Lavagna and launched in 1976. Oliria's merit is that she has only had two owners so far, and she has never been rented out for charter. The first owner had the yacht from 1976 to 1998 and the current owner from 1998 until today. The care with which Oliria has been kept can be seen by visiting the yacht and by considering the maintenance work done over the years, especially by the current owner. **£485,000.** Contact: **Edoardo via edoardoboglione@hotmail.com / +39 340 6979 311**



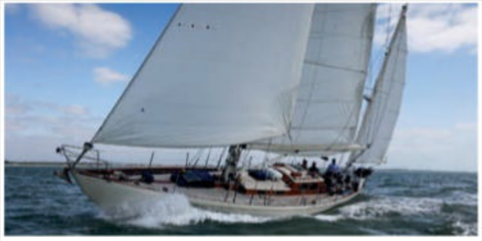
2013 EDWARDIAN LAUNCH

45ft steel hull by Tyler exceptionally high quality fit out using reclaimed teak, pitch pine and elm. 76 hp Barrus, woodburner, Webasto heating, bow thruster. Forward wheel steering and also a tiller. Recent revarnish using Coelan for 10 year protection. **£195,000**. Transferable mooring in Abingdon.
Contact: **07880 565851**
George.Bulkley@bristol.ac.uk



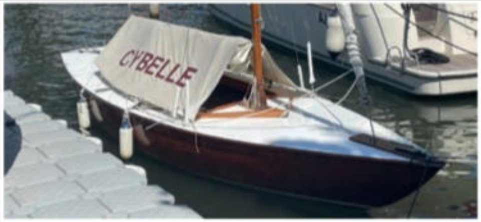
PRIOR 37 - MALOUINE

Designed by Alan Buchanan. LOA 37', Beam 10', Draft 6'9", Disp. 7T. Exceptionally well built by Priors of Burnham (1962). Teak on rock elm with bronze floors, knees & ring frames, and lead keel. Malouine is as solid as the day she was launched. Main refits: 2003 new ¾" teak on ply decks; 2012 rewired & new instruments; 2013 saloon stripped and refinished; 2017 mast step replaced & frames refastened; 2018 keel bolts checked, bilges painted; 2019 new upholstery; 2023 engine (Volvo 2003 28hp) stripped and rebuilt, new heads, seacocks serviced; 2025 minor re-caulking. Excellent spec for cruising. Once owned by Douglas Gill, Malouine has been in the current ownership since 2000 and is a much loved family cruising boat. She is comfortable on coastal meanders and instils confidence on lengthy passages. Currently maintained by Walsteds (www.walsteds.com) in Svendborg, Denmark. Malouine has EU & UK VAT paid status for this sale by quirk of Brexit regulations. **€40,000.**
Contact: **Andrew at aapfleck@gmail.com or +44 (0)7825569085**



SPEEDWELL OF CREMYLL, 49' YAWL

Designed Buchanan, built Mashfords 1962. Extensive refit and sympathetic professional modernisation 2018. Perkins diesel, equipped for long distance. Versatile accommodation and good for family or short handed cruising. Full spec and inventory available. Much admired. Any reasonable offer considered.
Contact: **David on 07793834424 or via david@bucksfield.co.uk**

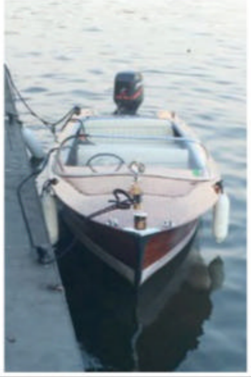


CYBELLE - BB11 KEELBOAT + TRAILER

Pretty 6m sailing boat, BB11 class (like a smaller version of a Dragon), approximately 1500 built. Iron Keel, varnished mahogany. Approx £12,000 refit in 2020 including deck replaced. No engine, but rigged for side mounted outboard. Roller genoa and main, both very lightly used. Great little boat for single or double handed sailing. Stable and forgiving, roadworthy trailer included. All offers considered over **£7k**
Contact: **Interested parties please call Tom on 07798 518 024**

RAGAZZA BELLA

1955 Bianchi e Cecchi Sportsman, built for a Genoese shopkeeper, restored in 2019/2020 at Bristol's Underfall Yard and now enjoying life in the Bristol's floating harbour. She comes with a 2016 Indespension Big Dipper trailer, a delightful bespoke swim ladder, 1992 four stroke 50HP Mercury outboard and a full winter cover. She is 5.49m long, 1.8m in the beam. Lying Bristol Harbour.
£21,000 ONO
Contact: **Ian Wilkinson.**
ianwilk2000@yahoo.com
07496448879



RING 16FT 10 EX OFFSHORE RACING BOAT

PFM raced mid-late 80's, 90 horse power Yamaha, full rig 1984 This boat does require new flooring, however the hull is very sound and the trailer has three new tyres recently fitted. A chance for you to buy a piece of history. Collection in person - Hertfordshire area. **Price £1,950 ONO** Contact: **Mark on 07791747291**

THAMES SINGLE SKIFF 'GRACE'

Including Trailer. 21ft Single Thames Ski ff built by Timms c.1903 and newly varnished. Fully equipped with two sets of sculls, cushions, launching trolley and road trailer. **£3,500 o.n.o.** Contact: **Jill and Mike Preiss 0777 6302584 or Mpreiss9@gmail.com**

ALBERT STRANGE CLASSIC 'EMERALD'

Canoe yawl 28ft6in x 8ft x 4ft6in, pitch-pine on oak 1937 to AS's own Cherub III of 1910. VG condition; new standing rigging, good sails, Taylor's cooker & heater, windlass, Yanmar 20hp, feathering prop, aquadrive. Chichester. **£27,000** Contact: **Dick Wynne +44 (0) 7990 573160 richard.wynne@lodestarbooks.com**

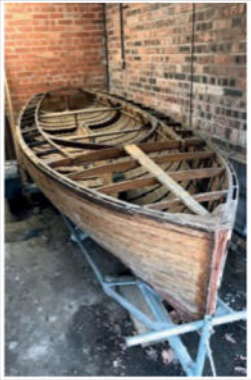
CHANCE 37 - PEGASO

Completely refitted and modernized example of Wauquiez/ Britten Chance classic. Deck redesigned, new winches, clutches, tracks etc. Volvo MD2 diesel rebuilt. Extra batteries, new instrumentation, autopilot. New standing/ running rigging. Carbon genniker boom. These boats (95 built) were known for windward ability and stiffness, with 45% ballast ratio. Pegaso would be an excellent choice for races like the AZAB or Round-Britain. **£79,500**

Contact: **nick@nicholas-millard.com or 07816668737**

TARANA - 1912 NORMAN E. DALLIMORE GAFF CUTTER

A rare early example of Dallimore's work, built by Cole & Sons, London. Purchased in 1935 by Major C.C.L. Ryan for use in the Persian Gulf. Major rebuild (2005–2007) with new deck, engine, rigging, sails, and interior. New rigging in 2018, minimal engine hours, and recently painted to a mirror finish. L.O.A. 24', Beam 7'1", Draft 4'7". Rich documented history. A very special yacht.**£12,000** Contact: **Mati via 07928754813 or ringrosesfalmouth@gmail.com**



PARTIALLY RESTORED UFFA FOX LOOE REDWING R101 CLINKER DINGHY

Built circa 1949), 90% rib renewed with copper riveted steamed green oak. Plank repairs and new deck, fittings and finish required. Timber mast boom and tired sails, timber and original metal fin. Inc. good condition road trailer and launching trolley. Stalled restoration project and boat deserving of TLC by enthusiast with potential to race via Redwing Association. Shropshire. **P.O.A.** Contact: **lozz.dee@icloud.com.**

13FT CLINKER MOTORBOAT

13ft clinker motorboat with bespoke fitted storage cover. A delightful beautifully built clinker period family boat. Built by Borwicks Ltd of Windermere – believed to be in the 1920's. Four storage lockers; with good batteries. Steering by wheel or auxiliary rudder. Engine: 4hp Stuart Turner P5ME 2 stroke engine with electric start & generator. Forward &reverse gearbox turning a 9 ins 3 blade bronze propellor. Manual & electric bilge pumps. LOA: 13ft. Beam: 5ft 3ins. Draft: 1 ft 6 ins. In excellent all-round condition – engine runs well. The boat has been dry stored for the past two seasons due to my absence overseas and needs a new owner and a little fettling to get back on the water. No trailer but could be delivered at cost. Currently lying at Treath on the Helford River; West Cornwall.**£5,950**

Contact: **07990 917109 or sebastianmills@rhone.ch**

1926 BROOKE LAUNCH MERLIN

This 20ft x 5ft launch – mahogany on oak, Norfolk Broads registration Y5 – was delivered to her first owner on the River Yare almost 100 years ago. She's a sound, smart, very pretty boat, now converted to electric power, with fold-down windscreen, folding hood, wicker seats forward and a cushioned bench-seat aft. **£20,000**. Contact: **bernard.barnett@btconnect.com or 01603 270539**

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CLASSIC AND VINTAGE YACHTS

We hope that you enjoy our selection of vintage and classic sailing yachts. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information on any of the yachts featured here.

108FT WILLIAM FIFE III 108 FT SCHOONER 1931/2007

Named after one of the brightest stars, the William Fife III schooner ALTAIR enjoys near mythical status for good reason: the standard-bearer for the cause of authenticity since her landmark 1987 restoration. While important as the yacht that started what became the classic yacht revival, that role is as nothing to her own status at the top of this hierarchy. ALTAIR is the ultimate vintage yacht. In recent years she has succeeded in paying homage to her original owner's unfulfilled desire to safely sail to the South Sea Islands. Her dimensions have allowed for the modern comforts that a smaller classic will not, all discreetly concealed, allowing her to cruise anywhere. And she is one of very few classic yachts of her vintage afloat with unbroken Lloyd's ✠100A1 classification.

€6.5M EUR **Lying Spain**

121FT JOHN G. ALDEN 3-MASTED GAFF SCHOONER 2021

Alden design #347 gathered dust for 90 years until a passionately knowledgeable individual brought her to life as WOLFHOUND. Executed by the best people, including naval architect Niels Helleberg who began his Alden career working with the man who originally drew her lines. She was Graafship's first new classic schooner instead of a replica, and a labour of love for the finishing craftsmen. WOLFHOUND has two Atlantic crossings under her belt and enjoyed a period of extensive Baltic cruising, all crewed by family and friends. Vindication of John Alden's minimally crewed dream yacht for exploration adventures beyond the horizon: WOLFHOUND's brave, wholesome appearance - very different from the replicas built for the classic regatta circuit - shouts this.

€6.5M EUR VAT not Paid **Lying Germany**

71FT SPARKMAN & STEPHENS/ SANGERMANI BERMUDAN YAWL 1963

In our quest for the most interesting classic and vintage yachts, every so often we are offered the chance to market a boat that's quietly existed away from the limelight, in the same ownership, almost unaltered since new. ROSALÙ is one. Her S&S/ Sangermani pedigree, performance, quality of build, and finish are assured; also that aura of a yacht still happy being what she was supposed to be. You enter her world, and just know she will never disappoint. ROSALÙ has always been enjoyed by summer, and been well cared for by winter, including occasionally necessary, more extensive refits and upgrades to her equipment. Her La Spezia berth is available by separate negotiation.

€650,000 EUR **Lying Italy**

36FT GL WATSON GAFF CUTTER 1894/2005

PEGGY BAWN's exceptionally authentic restoration is recognised in her CIM rating's almost unrivalled coefficient of authenticity. Cruised and raced since, she is noted for perfect balance and good manners. In 20 knots under fingertip control her toe rail kisses the water, and up to 17 knots, a flutter in her jackyard topsail marks optimum groove. Easily rigged and sailed by two, this perfect Victorian cruiser/racer offers the opportunity to step back in time and into the shoes of her illustrious designer. Custom Harbeck '5th Wheel' road trailer included in her inventory.

€300,000 EUR **Lying Ireland**

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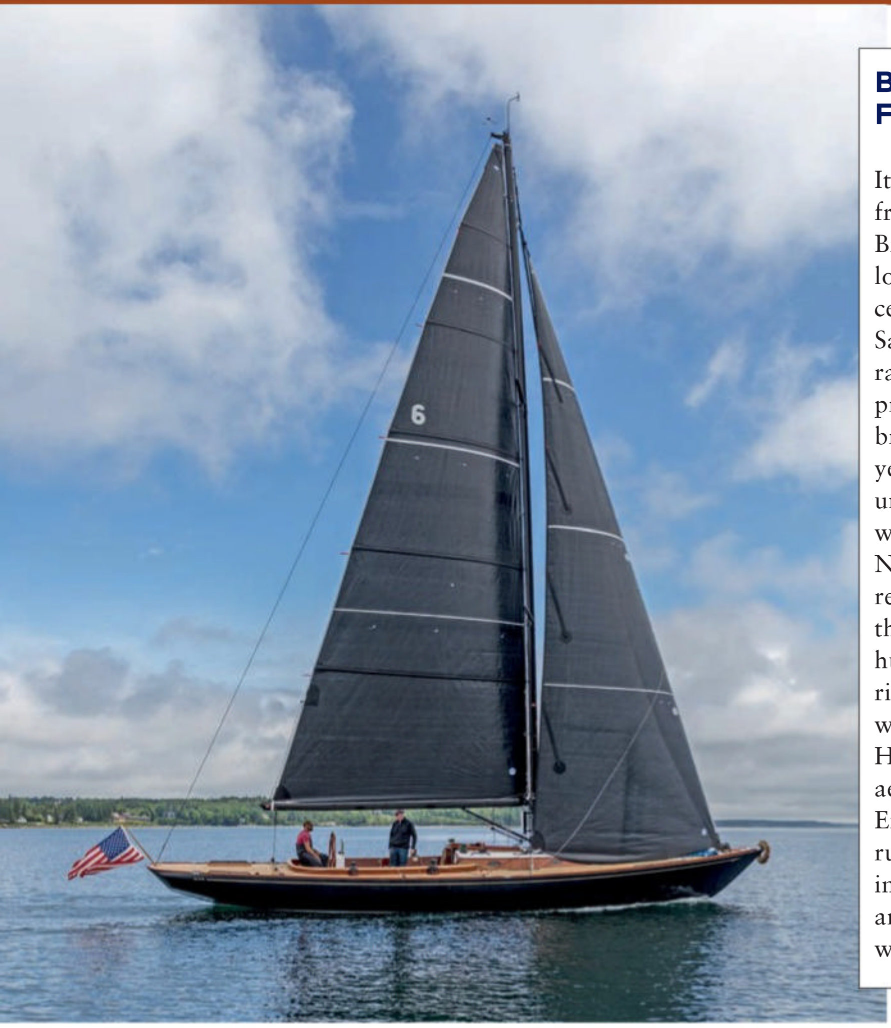
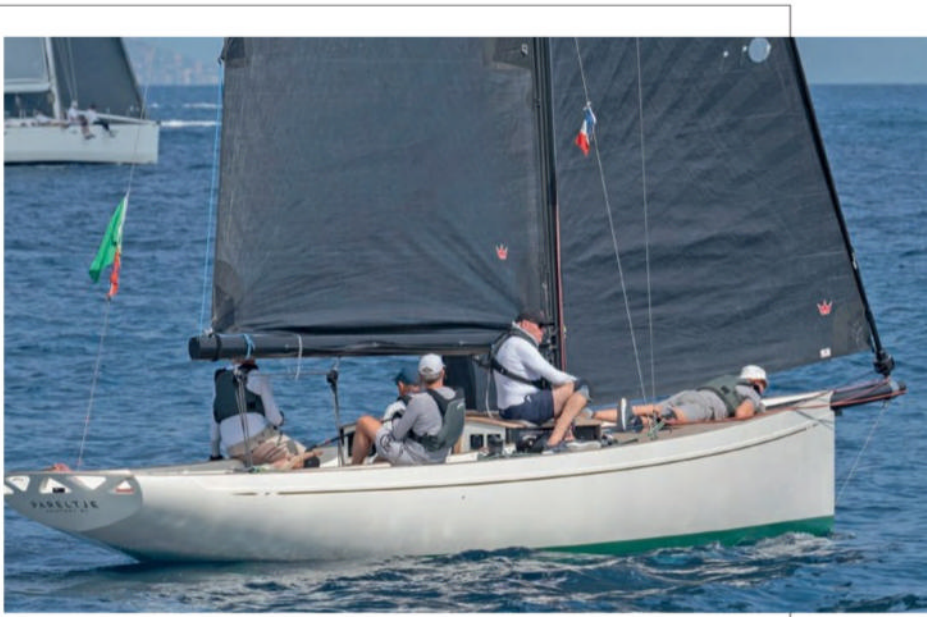


BROOKLIN BOATYARD, MAINE
FASTER E47 IN BUILD

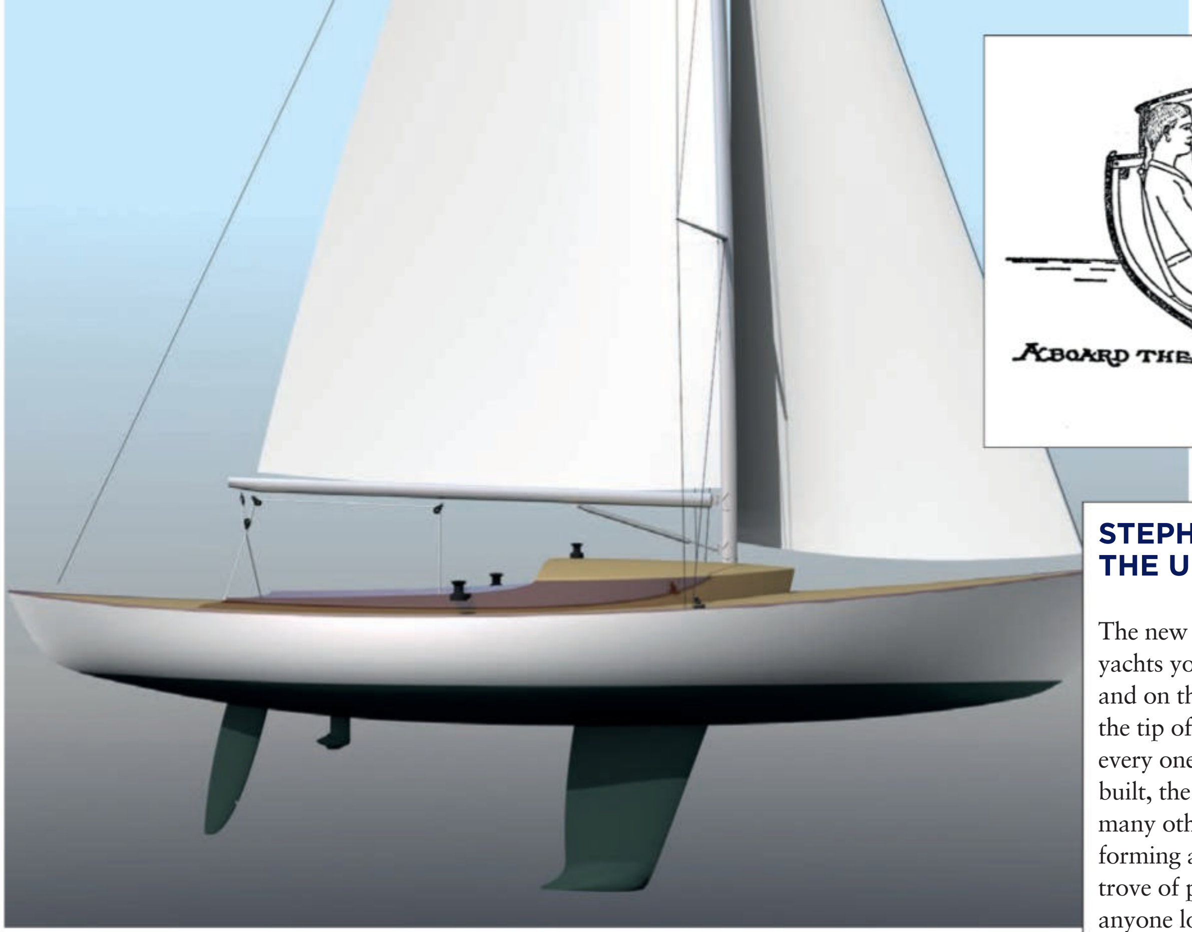
It's probably fair to say that owners are demanding ever more from their spirit-of-tradition yachts. The original E47 from Brooklin Boatyard more than a decade ago, had the classic looks and modern-timber build that people love, and it certainly wasn't slow. But by 2022, the E47+ had arrived. Same good looks, but around 30 seconds faster per mile by rating, and on the water too, thanks to a diet of speed prescribed by E47 designer Will Sturdy. The first of that new breed was *Tink* in 2022, shortly followed by *Harper* the next year. "No part of the original Eggemoggin 47 design was left untouched," says Will. "The overall proportions of the hull were adjusted to help her handle the windy conditions of Narragansett Bay, and subtle tweaks above the water helped refine her aesthetics and improve seakeeping while retaining the distinctive look of her predecessor. Under the water, the hull was completely reshaped to optimise the careful balance of righting moment, displacement, and drag. Working closely with Ken Read and the engineering teams at North Sails and Hall Spars, the rig and sails were thoroughly optimized for aerodynamic efficiency while keeping the easy handling. SDK Engineering was brought into the team to design the keel and rudder, producing a wickedly efficient foil package. Using our in-house structural engineering tools, the wood-composite hull and deck were redesigned to significantly increase stiffness while reducing weight."

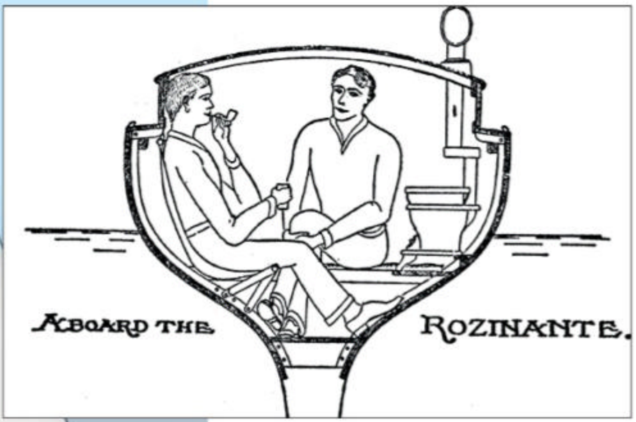
WALLY NANO 37
SMALL, LIGHT AND FAST

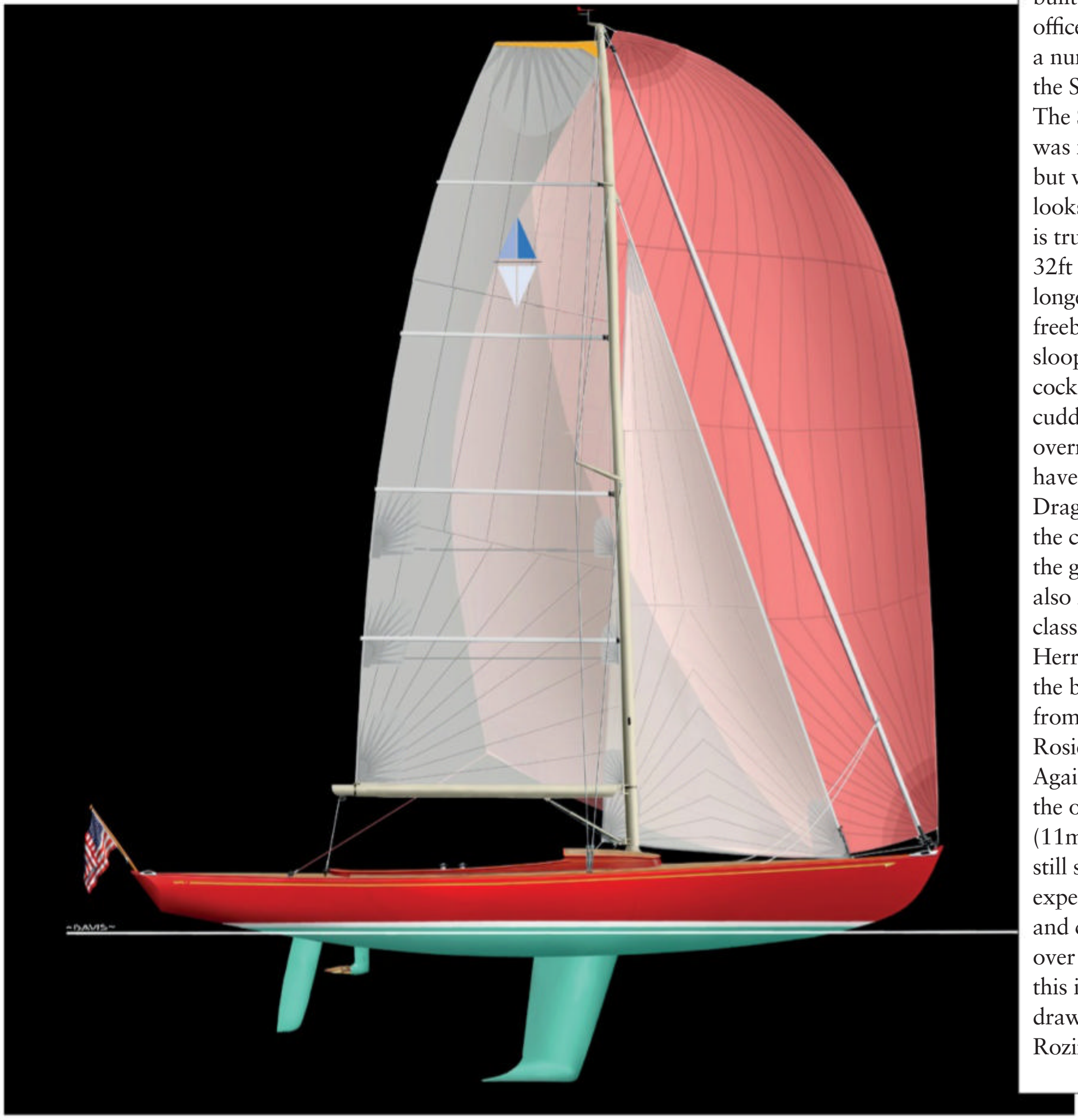


A newcomer to the Mediterranean classics circuit in 2025 was the Wally Nano 37 *Pareltje*. The owner is Pieter Taselaar, a well-known sailor in modern racing, who won a world title in the Melges 32 class and the North American title in the Melges 24. He has now bought one of the Andre Hoek-designed Wally Nano MkIIs, a beautiful and fast modern classic with carbon build and spars, which he sails with friends and family. The boat is 37ft (11.3m) on deck, with a plumb bow and long retractable bowsprit, low cabin trunk and an elegant counter stern. Built at the Dutch Doomernik yard, there is good attention to detail and with those lines it's hard to believe she's part of the Wally range.

Pieter won third place in the Voiles d'Antibes on this, his first season, and first at Imperia, then fourth at Cannes after a protest. With no spirit-of-tradition class at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez this year, she was moved to the Moderns where she raced with a difficult handicap against 27, mostly much larger, boats. Thanks in no small part to the carbon build, the Wally Nano displaces less than three tonnes, with a deep lead bulb keel (8ft/2.6m). Upwind sail area is 775sqft (72m^2) and the interior offers four berths, galley and heads in a modern teak and mahogany finish. According to Wally, she'll sustain 20 knots downwind with a suitably large headsail. For those wanting to sail their Nanos far and wide, the mast splits into two sections, and the keel bolts are easily accessible, meaning she can be transported in a standard 40ft (12.2m) container. *Kathy Mansfield*




ABOARD THE ROZINANTE.



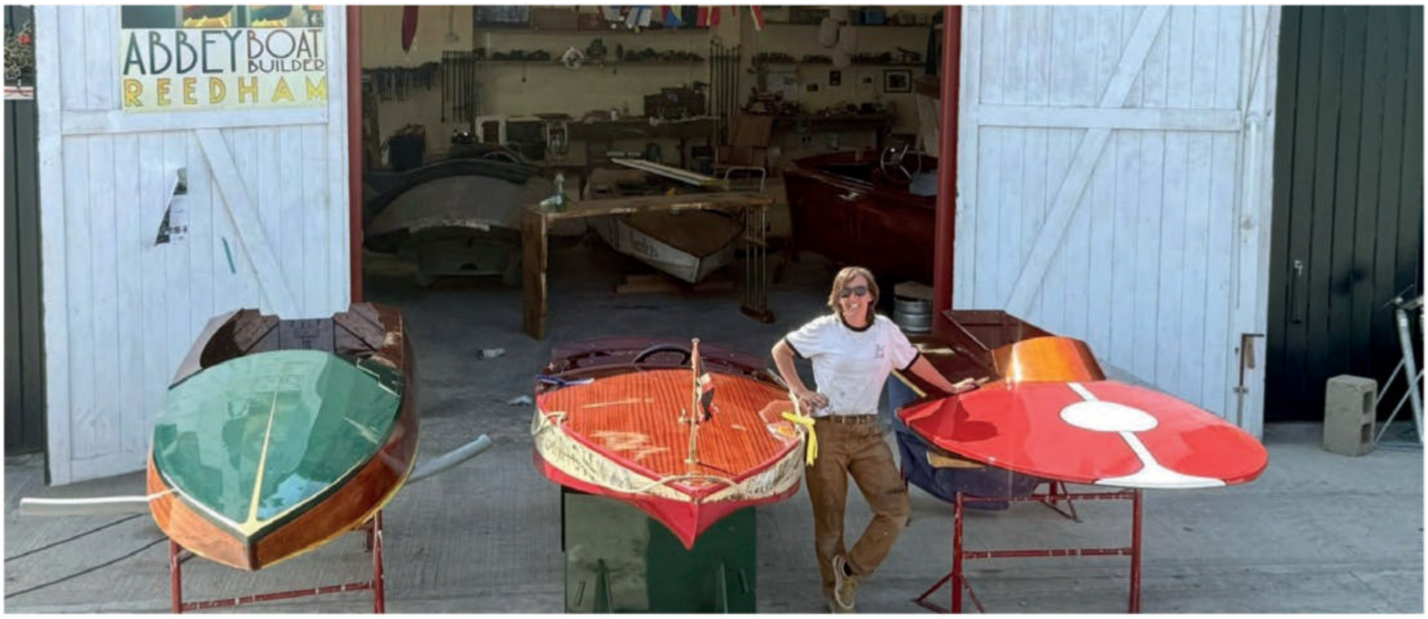
STEPHENS WARING THE UNBUILT REALM

The new spirit-of-tradition yachts you see on the water and on these pages are only the tip of a design iceberg. For every one commissioned and built, the designer will have many others not yet realised, forming a fascinating treasure trove of possibilities for anyone looking to have a boat built. The Maine-based design office of Stephens Waring has a number on its website, like the Signature 32 and Rosie. The Signature 32 (lower left) was inspired by the graceful, but very wet, Dragons. In looks and purpose, the Sig 32 is true to her forebear, but at 32ft 8in (10m), she's a little longer, with more beam and freeboard and a tall, carbon sloop rig. She's all about cockpit space but the compact cuddy will provide basic overnighting for two. People have been 'cruisifying' old Dragons for years, but this is the concept reimagined from the ground up. The team has also recently reworked another classic daysailer: L Francis Herreshoff's Rozinante, one of the best-regarded daysailers from history. "We call her Rosie" says Bob Stephens. Again, she's a little bigger than the original Rozinante, at 36ft (11m), and a little beamier, but still slim at 7ft 7in (2.3m): expectations of performance and comfort have moved on over the years, as a glance at this interior accommodation drawing from the original Rozinante design demonstrates!

Craftsmanship

Yard News

Edited by Steffan Meyric Hughes
Email steffan@classicboat.co.uk



REEDHAM, NORFOLK

The barn-find hydroplanes

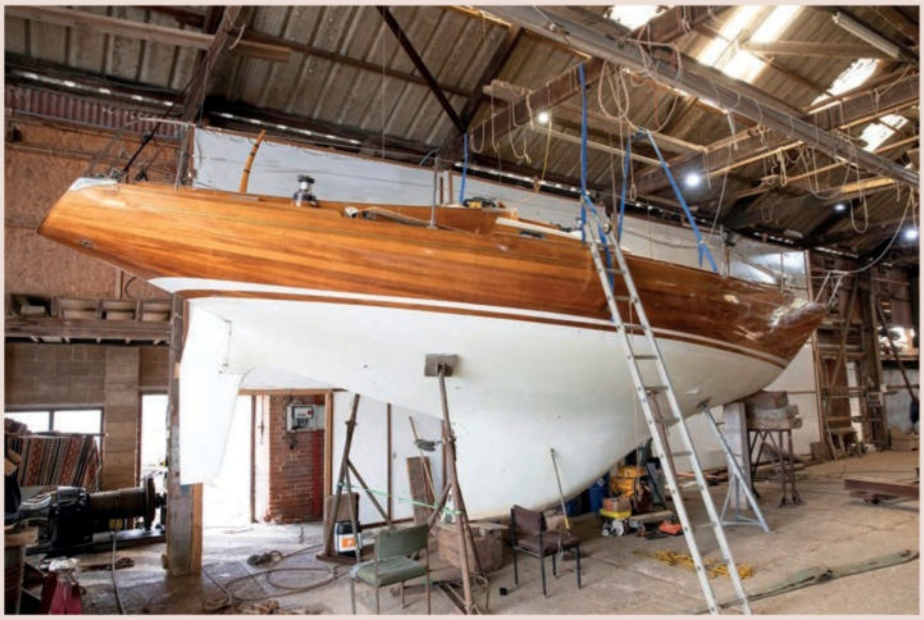
Boatbuilder Abbey Molyneux, featured not so long ago on these pages for staging a symposium of boatbuilders at her yard, has been busy creating a fascinating microcosm of vintage hydroplane racing, alongside her other work restoring heavier wooden motor cruisers. It all started with the chance discovery of *Miss Norwich*, a 1920s, CT Lewis-built, stepped hydroplane that raced in 1928 and 1929 and was laid to rest in a barn in the 1930s, where she rested in silence for nearly a century.

At the 2023 Henley Trad, Abbey found an owner to fund the rebuild, and they promptly had two more restored for racing. "I suppose we've created a racing scene that didn't exist!" says Abbey, referring to the fact that Abbey and friends, as well as the owners, have raced them on a private lake in Northamptonshire. The yard now has 14 of these hydroplane in varying stages of repair, some for the Museo Barco Lariana on the shore of Lake Como, featured before in this magazine. Three are now complete, three are due in (or rather on) the water by April, and the yard now has a further three that are available for new owners to restore and perhaps race.

Abbey collects these boats from Britain and further afield and restores the shells, with the responsibility for motors going to two specialist engineers. Some motors (typically outboards), are original, others are 'as original', cannibalised from vintage parts, others will no doubt be contemporary or at least sympathetic to the age. These pocket rockets, from around 14-23ft in length, had their heyday from 1925 until the 1960s, when GRP took over. They are capable of 25-40 knots, which must feel like warp speed when you're that close to the water. The early designs were stepped hydroplanes, with three-point hydroplanes coming in after the war.

COWES, ISLE OF WIGHT

S&S masterpiece in for work



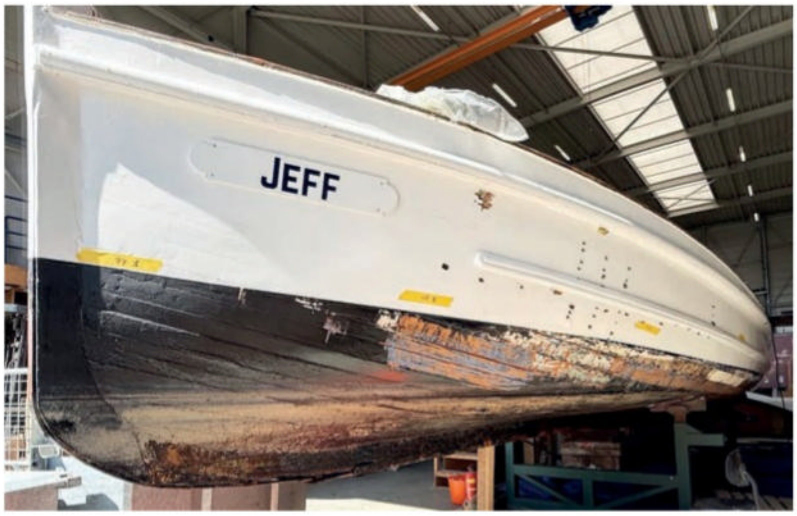
Volonté a 37 ft Sparkman & Stephens classic racer, designed for RORC's One Ton rule, is currently in Lallows boatyard in Cowes where she has spent the last three winters. She was built in 1968 by Felix Silvestro in Nice, France (S&S design No 1922) to the same shape and hull design as the famous *Clarionet* (S&S design No 1856), which was traditionally built at Clare Lallow boatyard of mahogany planking over larch frames. Lallows also built *Roundabout* (No 1857) for Sir Max Aitken which won the Round the Island Race in 1966 and 1967. All three yachts pioneered something new – fin keels, skeg rudders and counter sterns with small reverse transoms. So it is very appropriate that *Volonté*, although built in France, is now in Cowes.

Volonté was considered to be Felix Silvestro's masterpiece. The two-year build to an unlimited budget for owner-helmsman Yves Soissons was supervised by Rod Stephens, who flew to Nice for many progress meetings. *Volonté* won the prestigious Croisiere Bleue Regatta at Antibes in 1969.

Her most notable victory in recent times came in the 2011 edition of Sweden's Round Gotland Race. After a major refit in the winter of 2015 / 2016 by Hubert Stagnol at Loctudy, Britanny, *Volonté* now competes in Cowes at the British Classic Yacht Club Regatta. Owned by Lord Offord of Garvel, *Volonté* spends her winters at Lallows where she undergoes general maintenance. Last year, Lallows fitted a new, longer rudder which was extended for rating reasons. She also had some recent work on her engine, notably her gearbox. *Photo and story Ben Wood*

ENKHUIZEN, NETHERLANDS

Saving a Dunkirk little ship



The 39ft 9in (12.1m) Dunkirk little ship *Jeff* was built for Thames pleasure trips in 1923, by J Mears of Richmond, along with her sister ship *Mutt*. She was, until recently, one of the most original of the fleet of Dunkirk little ships, kept alive on a diet of small repairs and renewal over the years. She's now at the VMG yard for restoration. As one spokesman explained: "Each generation did what was needed with the materials and knowledge of the time. That patchwork of care kept her going through the decades, through wartime, and even through her role in Operation Dynamo, the evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940. But time leaves its mark. When *Jeff* arrived at our yard, it was clear that the years had caught up with her. Moisture readings showed high levels throughout the hull, the result of old techniques that had begun to break down. At that point, it was no longer just about keeping her going. It was about preserving her for the future."

The yard started with a full moisture survey and carefully stripped back several sections of the hull. She is now being slowly conditioned, allowing the wood to return to the right balance; a gradual process. Together with the specialists at Epifanes, the team made the decision to remove all paint and coatings and strip out the old caulking. These will be replaced with a flexible filler that works consistently within the paint system that will be applied later on.

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15ft Sea Otter
Photo: Peter Chesworth

31ft gaff cutter Polly
Photo: Keith Allso

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LYMAN MORSE

THE YARD THAT DOES IT ALL

From carbon fibre hulls and jet drives to restoring historic schooners, LM is a glimpse of the future – and it looks trad

WORDS CARL RICHARDSON **PHOTOS** HUGO SEGRAVE

The classic boat world has a certain look and feel. Harbours, creeks and weather-worn sheds all come to mind. Lyman-Morse is different. Spread over multiple facilities, buildings and technologies, this Maine-based build and design house is like nothing else, delivering a clear vision of how wooden boatbuilding might evolve.

Above: Thomaston has an impressive nautical heritage and an exciting future

The Thomaston Facility alone has some 11 buildings as well as a long stretch of jetty and deep-water moorings. Some of this scale is due to Lyman-Morse's diversification across several sectors and materials, from carbon and aluminium to basic GRP and the cold-moulded timber composite construction this area is famed for.

Leisure boating is still at the core of the business, with a healthy new order book and year-round maintenance, refit and storage for the local boats, many of which would have been built in the region, if not at LM itself. Boats of up to 150ft (45.7m) can be accommodated, and there is 110 tonnes of cranage and plentiful hard standing.

BIG PAST, BIG FUTURE

Thomaston is historically important, with the sheltered, deep inlet famous as a centre of schooner construction through the 19th century and beyond. The last connection to these times is the 1925 *Hindu*, run by local historic society Sail As You Are. LM worked on a five-year restoration of her, including new decks, bulwarks, cap rails, coaming, new deckhouses and hardware, sole beams, framing, bulkheads and engineering. You sense great pride in being entrusted with such a historic vessel.

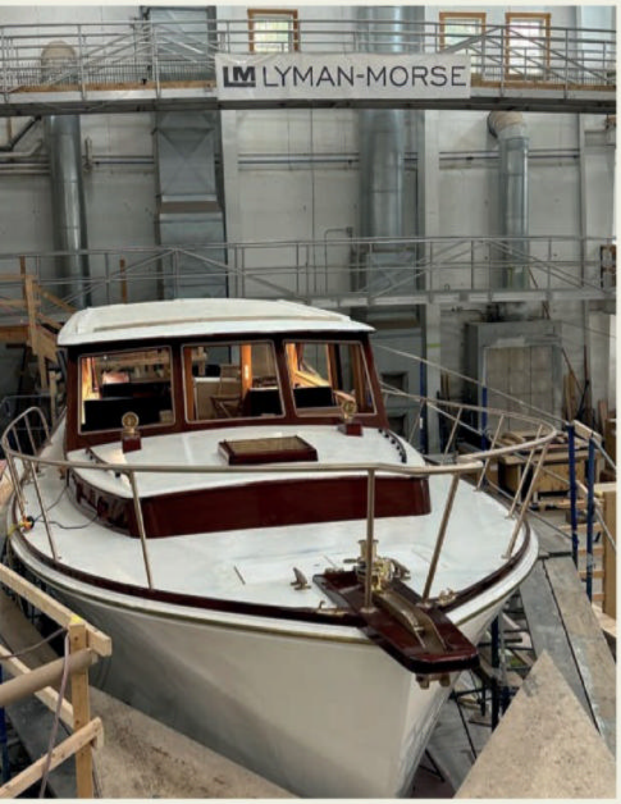
Bloodhound, a recreation of an original 1874 cutter, has been looked after by LM for many years. When its 68ft (20.7m) Sitka spruce mast was damaged in a storm, the yard designed and built a new mast ready for the season. *Reimagine* (ex-*Tumblehome*), a 90ft (27.4m) motor yacht built here, has also enjoyed major works at her home yard. Lyman-Morse spent three consecutive winters bringing the boat back to her current glory, allowing the owner to enjoy their summers. Works included a major engineering overhaul, all new electronics, house appliances, freshwater systems, a new galley, exterior paintwork, engine mounts, shafts and propellers.

Talking to our guide for the day, Boatbuilding Divisional Manager Lance Buchanan, there's a sense of personal as well as professional intent. With so many owners returning their boats for storage and maintenance, that's not surprising but it's still pleasing to see. Take *Comet*, the 2002, jet-powered commuter built here and home for some minor works and spoken about like a returning friend. Or *Dragonera*, the 1994 Joel White-designed 74ft (22.6m) ketch stored with Lyman-Morse for over a decade and looking as good as new.

Below: Keeping it local, Hindu (left) on the Lyman Morse dock, with Annie's Toy (background) and Comet

Clockwise from top: L&M's main shed, dock and support buildings, dealing with all types of craft and projects; a full-scale new build mock-up; the LM Fabrication facility; Rigging gantry; Pride and know-how were always on show, as with this bespoke bronze engine vent

New builds



Lyman Morse – Hood 42

The 42 was a mere rendering to us a few months ago. By the time we saw it, construction was well underway with the deck and pilothouse on and interior fit-out underway. Construction is cold-moulded Douglas fir and western red cedar with laminated deck beams. Lyman-Morse's full-service capabilities can be seen in the hidden electronics to maintain the classic feel at the helm, lithium battery banks and a Sea Keeper stabiliser.

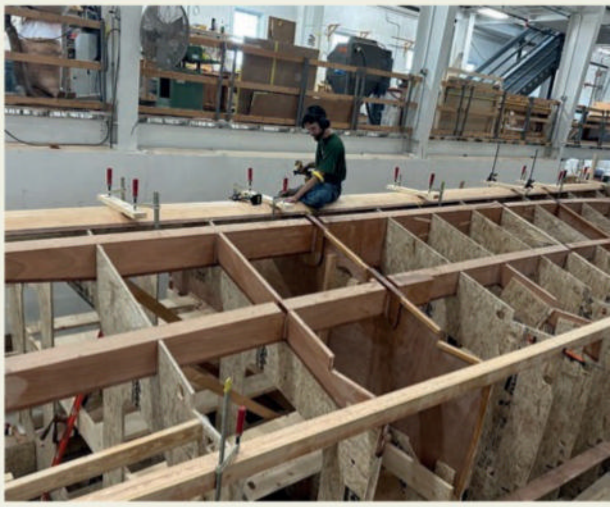
LOA	42ft (12.8m)
Beam	13ft (4m)
Draft	3ft 4in (1m)
Disp	9.5 tonnes (loaded)
Engines	Twin Volvo Penta D6 480hp

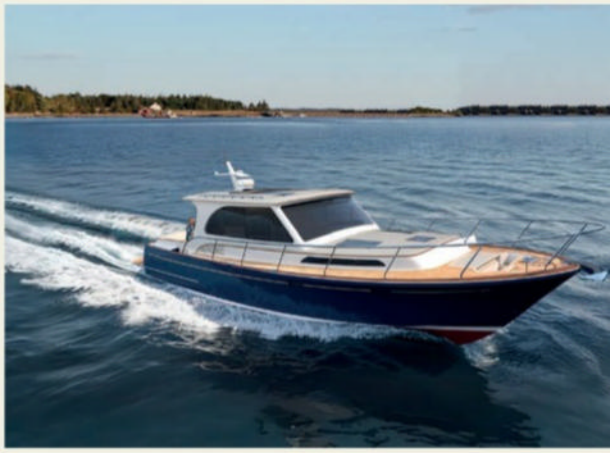
Lyman Morse - Hood 46

A boat that perfectly reflects Lyman Morse's ability to marry the best of new and classic worlds, the 46 will be jet-drive with a cold-moulded Douglas fir hull and an epoxy infused carbon fibre and foam construction deck. LM has used this pairing to great effect recently, citing the unique qualities of both materials.

The hull form has that same graceful forefoot and fine entry forward, transitioning to a constant deadrise with a still impressive 20 degrees at the transom, suggesting a smooth ride for what will be a fast-cruising yacht with an expected 40-knots top speed. Pushing away the spray, there is considerable flare to the forward sections with a noticeable tumblehome to the raked aft. Serious cruising features include a bulwark gate to starboard for easy alongside boarding. Inside the pilothouse, large expanses of glass will include power windows and a sunroof, the environment kept tranquil by a unique, variable output DC air-con system. Equally cool, the interior design is by Britain's Rhoades Young, working with white oak and American walnut for a modern classic look.

LOA	46ft 3in (14.1m)
Beam	15ft (4.6m)
Draft	2ft 9in (0.8m)
Engines	Twin Volvo Penta D13 900hp
Drive	Hamilton Jet
Top end	40 knots





Above left: CNC tooling and 3D metal printing will have a new specialist home Above right: LM Camden's impressive dock plays host to the Classics Cup every year

Away from yachting, we saw lines of RIBs for a naval contract and a shed full of fast aluminium commercial vessels with roll-on, roll-off capabilities at the LM Fabrication facility. We were introduced to Lyman-Morse Technologies' full-time team. One of the current projects is 3D metal printing. As Lance neatly puts it: "Our ability to turn design files into components printed in titanium or stainless steel is pretty exciting."

If you're wondering what all this has to do with planks and frames, the answer lies in an ongoing quest to offer clients the latest in construction capabilities and possibility, while developing its own team's skills and expertise. Lighter, stronger, multi-material solutions that deliver greater efficiency or performance, diversity of design and the in-house ability to fabricate whatever is required. While looking at the fleet of aluminium commercial vessels awaiting shipment, we were also shown some recently fabricated bespoke bronze engine vents for a customer. The pride shown in these 12x12in sections matched anything we witnessed on our travels.

Below: A new deck for this 54ft Alden

SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION

Across Maine, there is a discernible, joyous and, it feels, important willingness by the local yards and designers to collaborate. Lyman-Morse and CW Hood are long-time partners, and we saw two examples of their work in a virtually complete Lyman Morse Hood 42, and a 46 with a little longer to go. In an adjacent shed, *Blue Champagne,* a 54ft (16.5m) Alden design, was in for a new teak deck and a massive mechanical and technical upgrade. In a different section we walked through a full-size mock-up of the 46, allowing the design team to tune the ergonomics and dimensions.

As we walked along the raised gantries looking down on these projects, it didn't escape our notice that there was space and clean air all around, room to work and then some. Even with a 150-footer (46m) in here, this would be a superb environment, the equivalent of free-range boatbuilding. Incidentally, the gantries double as rigging platforms so everything can be removed or assembled inside.

A short drive away, we then headed to a brand-new facility dedicated to CNC. This part of LM Technologies was due to be fully operational the following week and another marker for Lyman-Morse's ongoing investment and full-service approach.

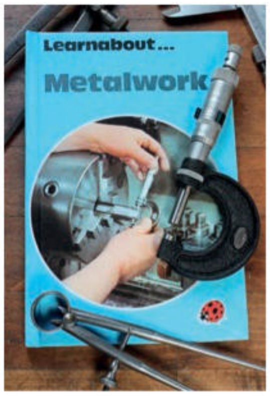
CAMDEN STATION

Our visit coincided with the Camden Classics Cup (Logbook, CB October 2025), run by Lyman-Morse from its freshly redeveloped Camden Harbor base. One of the smartest docks you'll find anywhere, the focus here is servicing and rigging, as well as larger refits. When we visited it was party central. That's another facet to LM culture, for all the serious maritime technology and capability, they never forget it's supposed to be fun, a policy led my president Drew Lyman who appears to be someone of limitless energy and positivity.

During our visit the docks were four-deep in classics and ten-deep at the bar but we still found out about some recent works to some important boats. *Soller* – built as *Auk VI* in 1992 by Lyman-Morse – is a 60ft (18m) Ray Hunt design. When she changed hands the new owner commissioned a full rebuild of the aft cabin, new helm consoles, teak decking, and new electronics. *Zemphira*, a local racing star designed by Stephens Waring with a wood and carbon composite build, recently went through a full interior refit and the installation of a new keel with a custom carbon grid, a bespoke, technical undertaking that mixes the modern and classic, perfectly reflecting this yard's ethos.

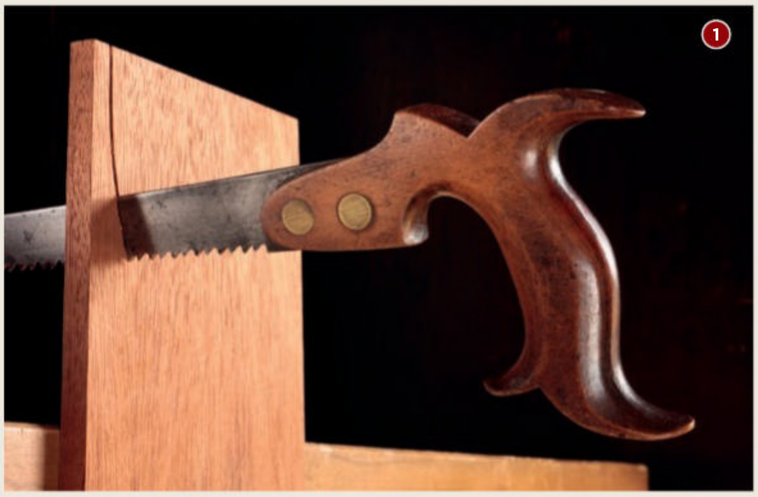
Boatbuilder's Notes

By Robin Gates

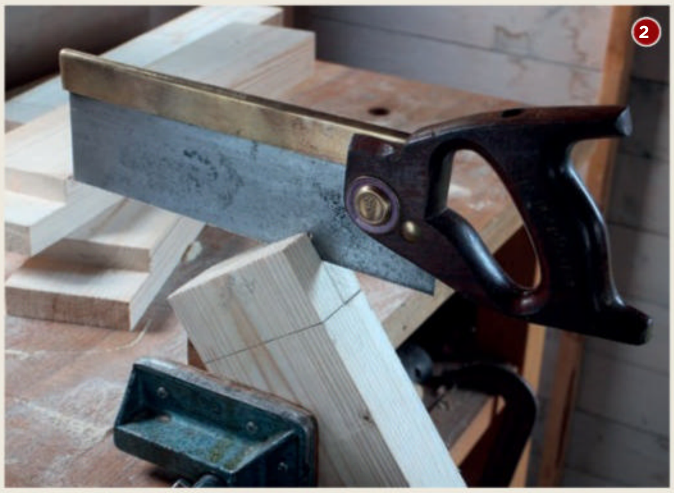


Ladybird metalwork (no, really)

There's a fair amount of metalwork in boats of all kinds, when you think of the number of fastenings and fittings involved. If, like me, your knowledge of metalwork is a bit rusty, here's an excellent refresher that'll help galvanize it against future corrosion – the aptly named *Metalwork* published by Ladybird Books in the 1970s. Concisely written by Brian Larkman and delightfully illustrated by Gerald Witcomb, the little hardback opens with a handy reference chart for oxide colours of tempering steel and an overview of nuts, bolts and screws that'll help with telling your cheese heads from your grubs. Thence to the uses and properties of metals, before an explanation of how they are extracted from their ores. The heart of the book is concerned with metalworking tools and techniques as relevant to building and fitting out a boat today as they were 50 years ago. Beginning with the scribes, calipers and micrometers of measuring and marking out, we proceed to files and filing, saws and sawing, drills and drilling, soldering, taps and dies, riveting, forging, hardening and tempering, casting, the lathe, and – finally – finishing. Happily there are plenty of old copies available online and for just a few pounds.



1 Compass saw by Drabble & Sanderson, open handle with steep hang



2 Spear & Jackson tenon saw, closed handle with moderate hang

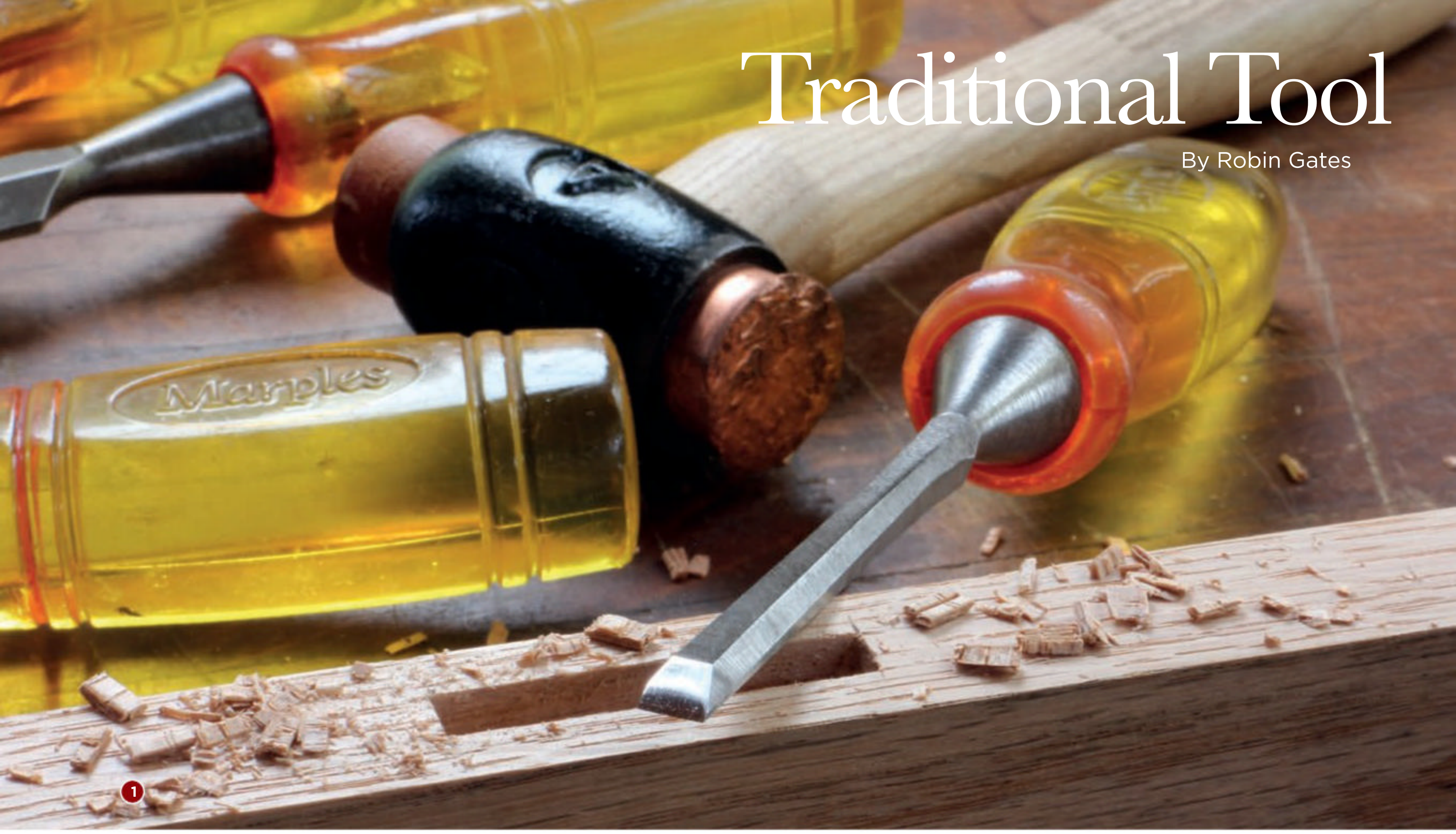
Getting the hang of a saw

Unlike chisel handles which, with few exceptions, are coaxial with the blade, saw handles are angled relative to the toothed edge to suit their speciality. Saw handles also tend to be rather pretty, perhaps shaped from some choice timber with eye-catching curves, but it's important to remember that it's the angle of the grip – the hang – which is a handle's most important feature. The hang is what determines if the push of the hand is biased towards downforce on the teeth or simply moving the saw forwards.

Other significant factors include the length, depth and weight of the blade, and the set and size of teeth, all of which should be optimised to purpose, be it cross-cutting, ripping, coping, or trimming. The hang may be measured (75° and 60° respectively for our compass and tenon saws) but the ideal often comes down to personal preference over a number. Just as it makes sense to get your hand on the tiller before buying a boat, it's worth getting a feel for the hang of the handle before buying a saw.

Traditional Tool

By Robin Gates



1 Mortising oak with a quarter-inch split-proof chisel

Split-proof chisels

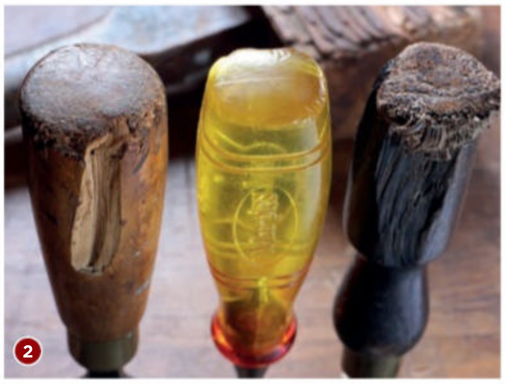
It's around 80 years since the first glass-reinforced plastic boat launched in the USA sent traditional wooden boatbuilding in the UK down a slipway to its present-day endangered status on Heritage Craft's Red List; fewer than 150 keep the trade alive. Wood as a tool-making material has been losing its grip on the tools of the boatbuilder's trade for a little longer. It began with the big manufacturers' claims for their moulded plastic handles being tougher and more durable than established tool-making timbers like beech, ash, and boxwood, but lower production costs also figured significantly.

These gaily-coloured plastic handles caught the eye of every forward-looking entrant to the trade, and those old hands not wishing to be thought out of touch. But down the years, plastic's image has often been tarnished by association with poor quality and short life, such that many are again turning to wood. Hand tools aspiring to heirloom quality often feature solid hardwood handles because, virtually indestructible as it may be, plastic never acquires that very personal patina that's unique to the work-worn wooden handle. Plastic handles may mimic wood's colour and grain but rarely do they feel right where feel matters most: in the hand. With the exception of chisels.

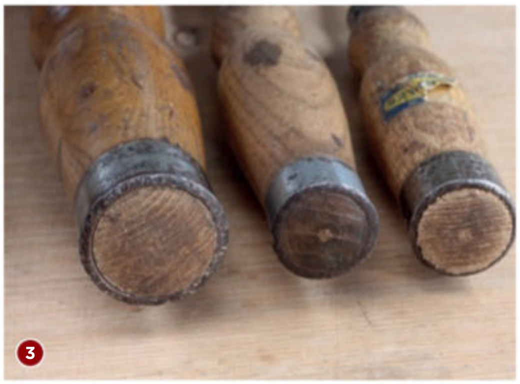
On the whole, boatbuilding chisels are subjected to rougher treatment than those of the daintier trades like lutherie and carving. Where tough timbers and big joints prevail it's customary for a chisel to be helped on its way by blows from a hefty mallet or steel hammer. The wooden handles of such stalwart chisels should be protected by steel hoops which reinforce the area of impact and prevent splitting. However, when push comes to shove and a hooped chisel proves elusive, it's often some poor hoop-less understudy that's obliged to step up, and you can always tell this hapless victim by the chunks of wood missing from its 'mushroomed' handle.

Small wonder, then, that the more resilient plastic-handled chisel has largely usurped its fragile forebears. In particular, Marples one-, three-quarter-, half-, and quarter-inch bevel edge chisels with hi-vis red and amber split-proof handles have become a stalwart quartet of the tool box. Reassuringly robust, these handles not only weather the blows of outrageous hammering but are moulded with a fulsome oval form that helps accurate positioning; useful when cutting a mortise, for example.

Next month: Rapier planes

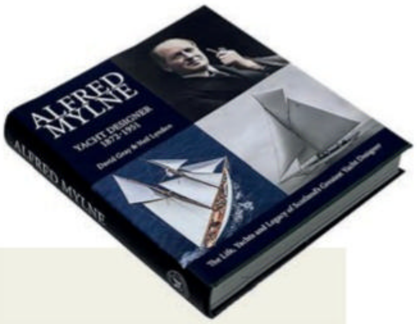


2 Hammer-damaged wooden handles



3 Hooped wooden chisel handles

Letters



LETTER OF THE MONTH SUPPORTED BY MYLNE YACHT DESIGN

Nancibelle's fate

I would like to know the whereabouts of *Nancibelle*, a 40ft barge yacht that my parents called home during the early 30s. Perhaps one of your readers knows? She is a Dunkirk little ship, her shallow draft made her ideal for the operation. They sold her in 1936 as they needed a larger home for me and moved to *Fortis*, a 60ft West Country trading ketch and then *Onda*, a 90ft Thames barge. I believe *Nancibelle* was built by Sittingbourne Shipbuilding in 1930 and was listed in Lloyds as being owned by AL Wilcox in 1939 and in 1947 by Geoffrey Lambert. I have heard that she was spotted in Cornwall looking forlorn with her hardware stripped and being used as a houseboat. I find myself thinking of her as she approaches her 100th anniversary.
John Newell, Toronto, Canada

Ed: the excellent Association of Dunkirk Little Ships archive has the answers, but sadly not the ones you were hoping for. In 2000, it was reported that she was "too far gone" and towed away by the Falmouth Harbour authorities. Nancibelle *certainly had a good innings, though. Records show that she changed hands three times before the war, including your father. In 1948* Nancibelle *was bought by Captain CRV Pugh CBE RN, to serve as a base for his family at Bourne End. It seems the Pugh family looked after and enjoyed her very well, sailing off in the early 1950s and ending up in Cornwall. Still in their ownership in the 1960s, some local vandalism, stealing the barge's lead, started a slow decline in her fate. The full story is at adls.org.uk*

Above: **Returning from Dunkirk with a full load and 'dry feet'**

Left: **My parents on the foredeck of their first home,** ***Nancibelle***

Thames memories

What a pleasure to read the October issue, which not only gave pride of place to beautiful ocean-racing yachts but also to the more modest vessels found on the River Thames. My first boat was a 16ft clinker gaff-rigged sloop built by Dauntless of Canvey Island, Essex, which I sailed, single-handed, from Poole to the Helford River 61 years ago. A very similar boat appears in Dick Durham's excellent Thames Estuary article. Whilst a Chaplain of the Mission to Seamen (now Seafarers), I used to winter my Folkboat on the Isle of Dogs and then explore the River Roach which I accessed via the Maplin Sands and Havengore Creek. We also enjoyed the story of the engineless *Blue Mermaid*, built in my wife's native Cornwall, and Norwegain boatbuilding. Congratulations on striking the right balance; ancient and modern, rich and not so rich!
Rev Michael Christopher Palmer,
West Sussex

Ed: Michael, what a letter and what memories. I know the mission and surrounding area well, your time there would no doubt make for some interesting tales. Another story to add to the Classic Boat 'balance' perhaps?

And because it's Christmas

Greetings from Western Australia. I have been a reader of Classic Boat for decades. May I say how much I enjoyed October 2025 edition. It contains many varied articles, the Fastnest 2025 was an interesting reflection of vintage and contemporary designs, the Thames Estuary article was particularly interesting and the humour in Sternpost, which I find a must read in every edition, superb. Thank you for the stories.
Geoff Totterdell, North Fremantle

OCTOBER 2025
Classic Boat
THE WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL BOATS
POWER & GLORY
Barcelona & Maine Regattas
Fastnet 2025 Report
CULTURAL PILOT
THAMES ESTUARY EXPLORED
LOOKING FOR LINTON
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Ed: Geoff, thank you (general note: I did check and Geoff's not a relation)

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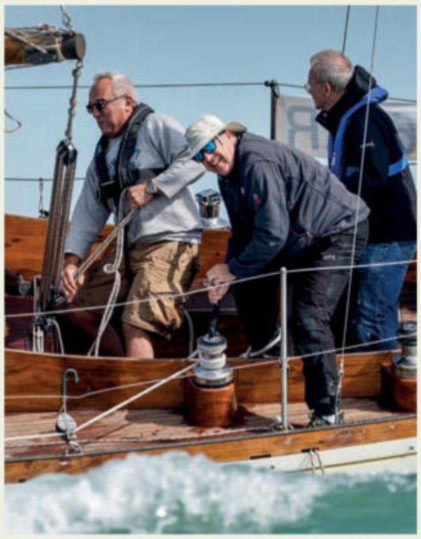
Next month

CHARMING & STRANGE

Albert Strange yachts are among English yachting's rarest and most beautiful fruits and the 1922-built *Charm*, recently restored, is no exception to that rule.



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COTE D'AZUR
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- Essential tips for planning an offshore trip
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30 YEARS AGO

DECEMBER 1995, CB90

It's always fun to read Robin Gates's old editorials and see how they stand up to the standards that today loves to place on yesterday; so I make no apology for quoting them freely and often. His editorial in this issue focused on different ways to buy a boat, and the way that seeming bargains can suck up more time and money than you may expect. And it's true that you have to be feeling pretty flush if you're going to mess with cheap boats, particularly if it's a 50ft wooden sailing yacht – see *Tally Ho* last month for example! But it's so tempting, as Robin allows, when that grand yacht seems fine and is the same cost as a new trailer sailer. He suggests a third way, one that seems to have diminished in popularity a little over the last couple of decades, and that is to buy a completed hull from a professional builder, and fit it out at home. Certainly, for those of patient and meticulous mien, this could be a great way to reduce cost and spread it over time. Those of us who are not quite "DIY completists", who paint half a kitchen then stop, for instance, had better avoid this route to happiness though. Elsewhere in the issue, we covered the annual gathering of trad craft in Scotland's Portsoy (still going today), and the origins and qualities of one of the world's most unusual boat types – the catboat, traditionally half as wide as it is long. We also featured the French photographer Christian Fevrier, likening him and his family to a modern-day equivalent of the Rosenfelds in American or the Bekens in England. A photo of him a decade ago showed a very strong, hale-looking man of 77 with a thick beard and beaming smile.

WIN WEEKEND CRUISE THE SCOTTISH ISLES
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CLASSIC BOAT
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Cold nights and old flames

Adrian Morgan remembers winters aboard, others try to forget

A creek, somewhere on the east coast, Walton Backwaters possibly? Wooden, gaff-rigged, with a baby Christmas tree hoisted to the truck. Canvas awning over the cockpit. The sound of gentle lapping on clinker as the water returns to the sea. Plaintive cry of a seabird. Wisp of smoke from the chimney. A glimmer of light through the porthole. You can almost smell the Irish stew in the pressure cooker, simmering on the Taylor's paraffin stove, hissing in the galley, while her owner refills his pipe, sucks deeply, and the aroma of St Bruno drifts down on the air to mingle with the essence of Essex mud as the flats emerge.

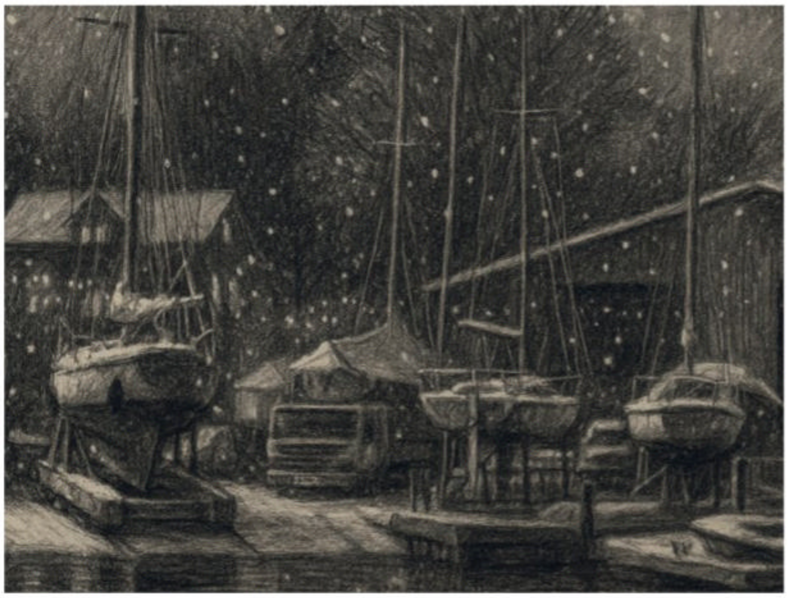
That is the image of Christmas aboard, as illustrated by the likes of Fid Harnack, late of *Yachting Monthly* and a prolific contributor in the days when sailing magazines used artists, rather than photographers. And this image of nostalgia is what every yacht owner still aims to recreate, albeit with Eberspacher purring and microwave clicking; and woebetide anyone smoking below these days. The fug on that gaffer would have rivalled the pea souper, creeping wraithlike over the marshes.

The only Christmas I have spent aboard was in the Canaries, on a wooden sloop called *Anxa*, waiting for the trades to carry us across to Barbados, and that doesn't count. Nor do those spent by anyone on any yacht in the southern hemisphere. No, it has to be cold, crispy, biting and a little uncomfortable. There has to be an element of hardship, self inflicted, and a little adventure; simply reversing her out off the slippery pontoon, breaking a thin layer of ice to reach the estuary will do. An early start, sun peering over the eastern horizon, daybreak on Christmas morning while the world sleeps. Chapped hands and smarting eyes. Stiff ropes, frozen reef points, a reluctance to leave the relative comfort of the cockpit to go forward and free the anchor. That sort of hardship, not the full on blast of the Southern Ocean.

Then all is forgotten as the sun makes a timid appearance, followed by the warming cup of tea, coffee or, best of all, Bovril, and naturally bacon butties, handed up from below, a fried egg dripping from the edges, eaten with fingerless woollen gloves, breath condensing in clouds, diesel chugging, exhaust burbling, course set for the fairway buoy, Christmas morning awakening.

Sally and I had the cold and hardship, just never on Christmas Day. For a week, I camped aboard her at The Elephant Boatyard on the Hamble, installing a new Yanmar diesel to replace the green monster of a Volvo that I inherited. The bridgedeck and companionway steps had been removed. The companionway itself lay open to the east wind, every breath of which penetrated my flimsy sleeping bag, in which I curled, fully clothed as the nights drew in. The only comfort – and I never let on to the yard's owner Tom Richardson – was my electric heater, full blast all night. When I say electric heater, I mean electric paint stripper. It took the edge off the cold, and melted the foot of my sleeping bag. It was a bonding that *Sally* must have appreciated. She has a Pascall Atkey Pansy these days, picked up for a small fortune at the much missed Beaulieu Boat Jumble.

When later, *Sally* was on a fore-and-aft mooring up river at Mercury, we would sail through the winter weekends, Solent anchorages, to Newtown Creek, Beaulieu and more. Part of the pleasure was in pretending this was *Sally*'s first season, 1937. With few other yachts out, it was easy to believe we had sailed back to a mythical, simpler time. Cooking was, of course, on a Taylor's, the firing of which took a knack known now to a vanishing few. Ours had automatic prickers; turn the knob fully, quickly, and a little sprig of wire would poke the hole free of gunge, sometimes. We used to fill the bowl with meths to heat the burners, later with a blow torch. Cherry red, careful not to melt the solder, precise timing was required: too soon and a column of burning paraffin would erupt, blackening the cabin roof. *Sally* was familiar with galley fires, one of which in the early years dampened her owner's wife's enthusiasm ever to go near the stove, or *Sally* for that matter.



I used to enjoy the process and became adept at lighting it. Rather like a Seagull outboard, Taylor's stoves have minds of their own. You can swear at a Seagull, and threaten to deep six it, at which it will usually start, but never at a Taylor's, for they will reply with fiery dragon breath and have you reaching for the extinguisher.

Eventually we replaced it with an alcohol stove, which could not be easier – and safer, too. Do I miss the drama? A little. Does Rona? Ask her, the role model for everyone's long-suffering partner. Not these days, perhaps, but in the late 1990s, when we both worked in London, early mornings before the drive up to work scarcely bear thinking about. Dawn light, bitterly cold, out of sleeping bags, into thermals, up and dressed quickly, shivering in oilies for the short row ashore.

We did rig up a crude heater consisting of a terracotta flower pot and a length of that stainless steel flexible flue pipe. Once the burner had been persuaded to behave, the pot was placed on top and the pipe lead to the mushroom vent on deck. Who knows how close we came to carbon monoxide poisoning. Did it take the edge of the cold? Well, yes it did actually. And only recently a good friend of ours called to ask if it was worth trying it on his crabber. Yes, I said, but don't blame me if they find you spark out on the bunk, stone cold. Better by far, fit an alarm.

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